Shocking evidence that proves ancient Bible visions were actually true!
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Revelation's prophecies that must be fulfilled before Jesus returns.
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Does the Bible matter?
How Daniel & Revelation apply to your life today!

DANIEL & REVELATION

Secrets of Bible Prophecy





The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in Qunram in 1947, provide impressive evidence for the integrity of both the Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts of the Old Testament. For example, 11 of the 12 chapters of Daniel were uncovered and speak to the issue of the book of Daniel's authenticity.



Daniel & Revelation

Secrets of Bible Prophecy

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A Portrait of Earth's History and Future 6

The major Bible books of Daniel and Revelation are our keys to understanding the past, present, and future—and both contain a window of hope revealing our place in prophecy today.

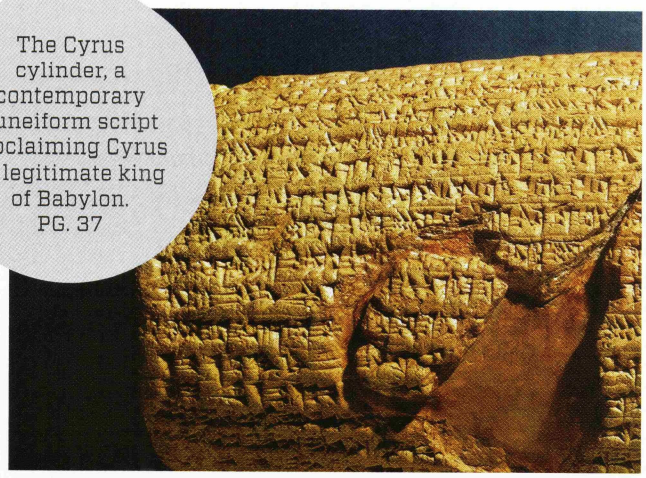
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A Portrait of Earth's History and Future

MODERN NUCLEAR SUBMARINES ARE AMONG THE MOST SOPHISTICATED ENGINEERING WONDERS OF THE WORLD. IN MANY WAYS THEY ARE EQUIVALENT TO A TIGHTLY PACKED, SELF-CONTAINED CITY IN WHICH A CREW OF 140 SHARES SPACE ABOUT THE SIZE OF A THREE-BEDROOM HOUSE.

Each submarine is powered by a nuclear reactor, which provides the energy that is converted to electricity. This amazing dynamo can run for more than 30 years and can carry the sub at least 400,000 miles without refueling. This power is also used to convert seawater to fresh water, purify the air, and turn the propeller that sends the submarine silently through the water—sometimes as deep as 800 feet!

Beneath the vast dark ocean, nuclear submarines manage to navigate using sonar and internal gyros. But as technologically advanced as this equipment is, nuclear submarines, of course, have no windows and still occasionally collide with a reef or another vessel. The only "window" to visually confirm their position while submerged is to draw near the surface and raise the periscope.

Have you ever wondered where our world is going? Is there a trustworthy way for us to peer into the future and get our bearings?

Many of us look at the moral decay in society—the crime, terrorism, wars, environmental disasters—and wonder, "Where are we heading? Something must give. Our world cannot continue spiraling downward much longer before imploding." To address this very issue, the Bible contains two major prophecy books that speak of the past, present, and future ... and they both contain a window of hope showing us our position in time today. They constitute a 360-degree periscope, showing us where our world is heading and revealing how we can have a secure future.

The Old Testament book of Daniel and the New Testament book of Revelation are powerful Bible periscopes. Together they provide us a broad panorama of yesterday, today, and tomorrow—a snapshot of world history from the time of Daniel while he was a captive in the country of Babylon in around 605 B.C. ... all the way down to the time when Christ will come again and beyond!

The book of Daniel was written by a Jewish young man who was taken captive by a foreign king and educated to be a statesmen in ancient Babylon. God revealed through dreams and visions to Daniel a great sweep of history that is confirmed by historians to be an accurate outline of world events. Daniel was a remarkably intelligent man who, despite threats of death, was also faithful to God. His book closes with the admonition that some things he wrote were to be locked up and revealed only later in time.

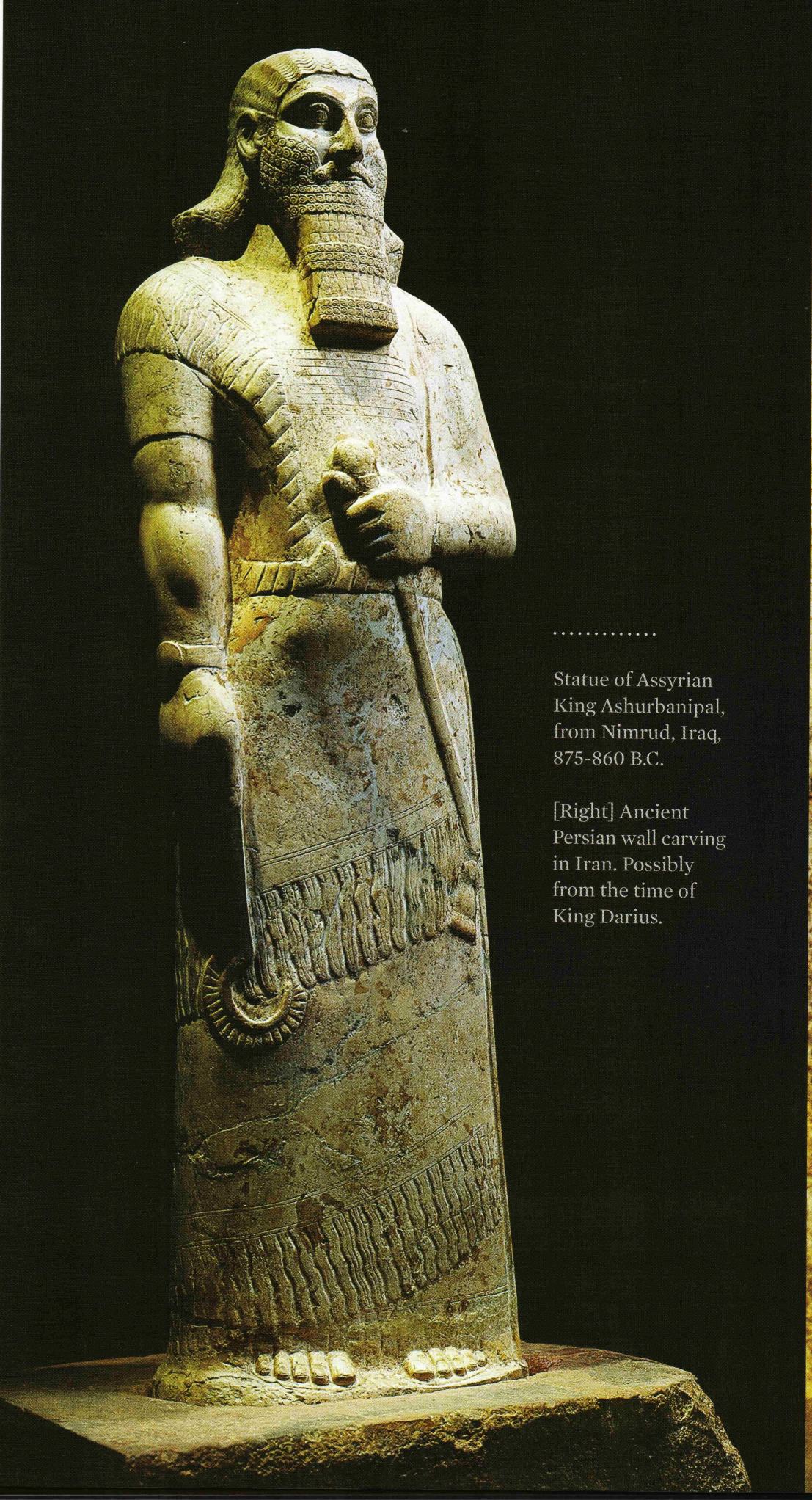
The book of Revelation was written by a follower of Jesus Christ whose name was John. During a time of persecution after the young church was making great progress, John was captured and then banished to a lonely island in order to be silenced—just at a time when he was most needed by the church. But God's plan was to speak deep things to this faithful follower, prophetic pictures of the future that would unlock truths from Daniel's book and carry them forward with an even clearer message.

Both Daniel and Revelation are books of prophecy that are filled with strange symbols about the past and the future. The average reader, unfamiliar with this special type of literature, might be confused by the beasts and the numbers, the idols and the mark of the beast. Do not be discouraged if you feel you cannot unlock every single verse in these two amazing books on your own. The God who opened the hearts of Daniel and John is the same God who will unlock these books in order to give you, a diligent searcher for truth, a taste of heavenly things.

"The Bible contains two major prophecy books that speak of the past, present, and future ... and they both contain a window of hope showing us our position in time today."

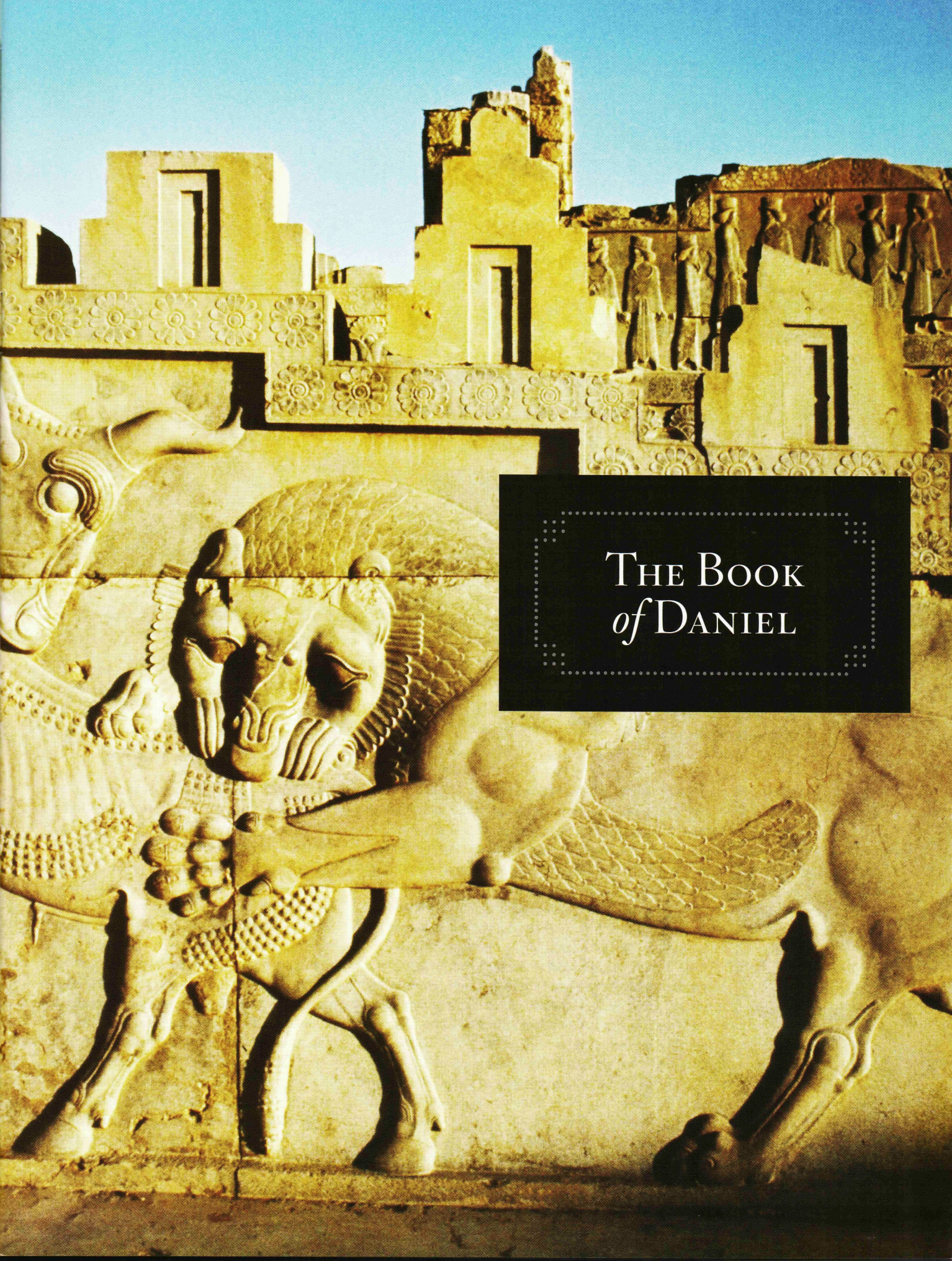
This special magazine on Daniel and Revelation has been created to provide you with a quick introduction to some of the most fascinating scenes revealed to mankind. It opens a window in our suffocating world and lets us know that there is life beyond the baking temperatures of doom that are rising around us. If you need a key (or a hammer) to open a door to what God has in store for you, then take a refreshing breath as you open the pages before you.





Statue of Assyrian King Ashurbanipal, from Nimrud, Iraq, 875-860 B.C.

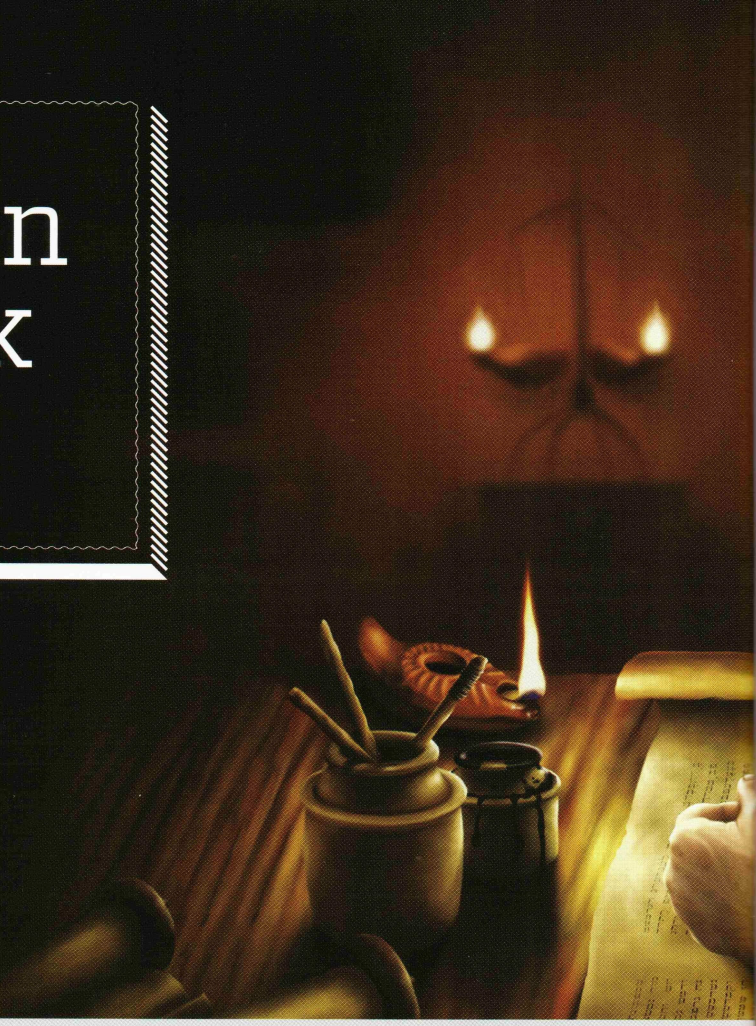
[Right] Ancient Persian wall carving in Iran. Possibly from the time of King Darius.



The Book *of* Daniel

Section 1

Introduction to the Book of Daniel



> *The greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people ... of the Most High.*
>
> —DANIEL 7:27

What You'll Learn

Who was Daniel the prophet?

Why is the book of Daniel a part of the Bible?

How does the book of Daniel apply to you today?

A WINGED LION, A FOUR-HEADED LEOPARD, A DRAGON-LIKE BEAST, A HORN THAT TALKS! STRANGE IMAGES FILL THE BOOK OF DANIEL, AN ANCIENT BOOK OF THE BIBLE FILLED WITH MYSTERIOUS SYMBOLS.

Who Was Daniel?

Daniel was probably a young member of Jerusalem's upper class. When King Nebuchadnezzar, founder and ruler of the Babylonian Empire, conquered the nation of Judah, he took some of its most prominent and promising citizens back to his land. Daniel was among these captives.

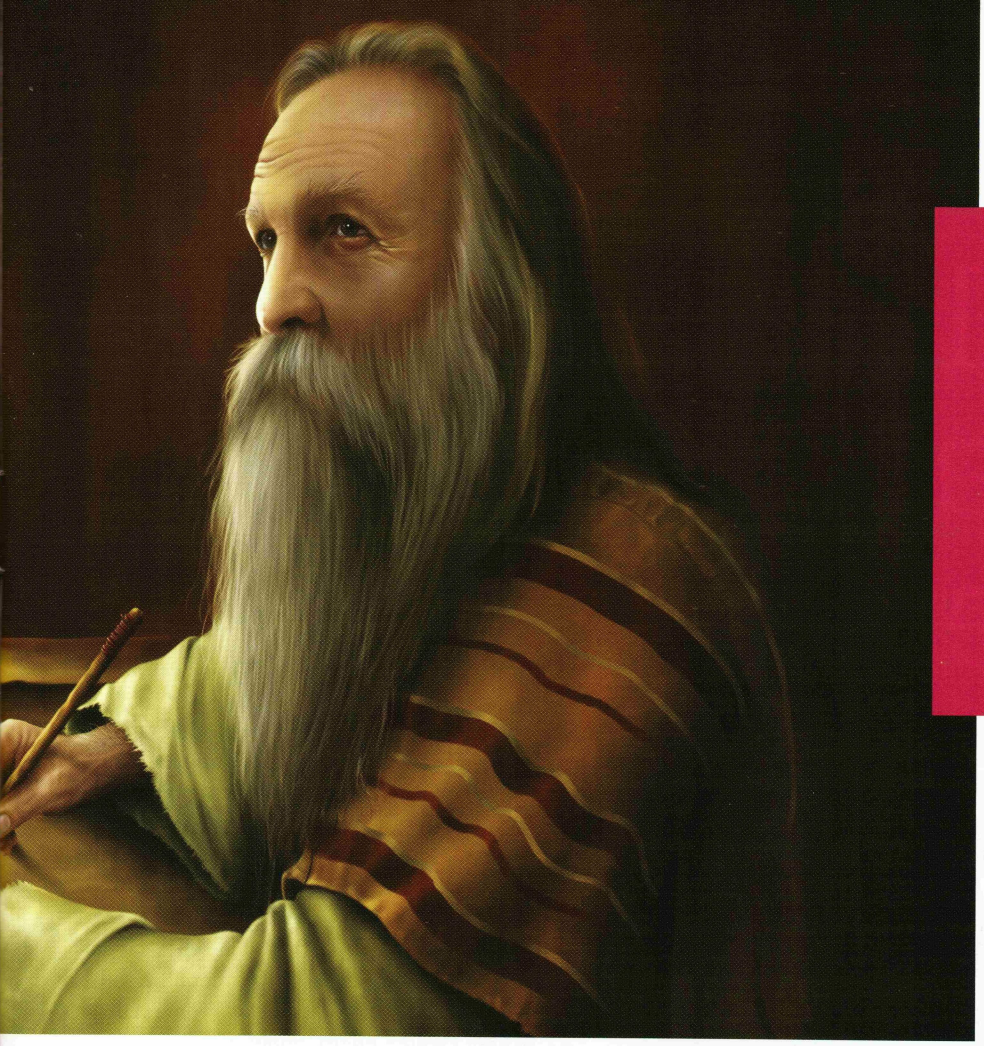
He was soon positioned as an advisor and administrator in the local government and developed such a good reputation that when the Persians later overthrew Babylon, they retained him as one of their top officials.

While Daniel held important positions in the service of the pagan kings of Babylon and Persia, he was foremost a servant of God. His main concerns were to see God's will done on earth and to see his people, the Hebrew nation, flourish.

Daniel lived at a time of great distress for the Jews. In fact, their nation no longer existed; it had been swallowed up by Babylon. So Daniel wrote to sustain them during those difficult times. His book gave an honest picture of what lay ahead for the Jews—and it was not very pretty. For the most part, the future held more of the same: Empire would succeed empire ... and through it all, God's people would be persecuted.

But Daniel's book held out hope. It spoke of a Messiah to come—actually specifying the time of His appearing. And its central theme was judgment. That might not sound very positive, but the coming of the judgment is actually good news to God's people.

The story of Daniel begins around 605 B.C.



The historical portions of this book provide Daniel's credentials as a faithful servant of God, modeling the way the Lord wants people to handle the temptations that stressful times can bring. They also build faith in God's rulership and goodness. These stories are uplifting and powerful, so please take the time to read them!

As Daniel makes clear, judgment means the end of evil and the establishment of God's kingdom. For God's people, it means resurrection and everlasting life.

In Babylon, Daniel received a new name —Belteshazzar.

Apocalyptic Prophecies

Daniel's book contains a mix of history and prophecy. Both are important. For the purpose of our study, however, we're going to focus on the chapters that look at God's prophetic revelations to Daniel, offering you interpretations that apply to events that have already passed and to events that are still to occur.

The prophecies in Daniel differ from most others found in the Old Testament. Other prophets—such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, Hosea and Malachi—wrote what biblical scholars call "classical prophecy." Daniel's prophecy is of the type known as "apocalyptic."

While each kind of prophecy occasionally contains elements of the other, the following generalizations are helpful ...

Classical prophecy most resembles sermons. It points out the sins of God's people, tells them the consequences of continuing unfaithfulness, and calls them to repentance.

Apocalyptic prophecy often avoids commentary about sin and repentance, seeing the world through the lens of the final judgment—when people are either with God or against Him and there is no middle ground. It means to point out the important issues and show the big picture of God's plan through history. These prophecies were originally intended for God's people who were being persecuted, but they are valuable to all people.

Interpreting Daniel

Many of Daniel's prophecies contain strange and confusing symbolism. But the principle for understanding Daniel is quite simple—let the Bible be its own interpreter. In other words, look first to Scripture itself for clues as to how to understand those parts that seem obscure.

The book of Daniel is of particular help here, because its individual prophecies parallel one another—each adding to a picture previously portrayed. You can often clear up difficult parts of one prophecy by looking at the corresponding prophecy of another section.

Likewise, the book of Revelation is built on Daniel's prophecies, and the Gospels reveal references Jesus made to them, so these books also add to our understanding of Daniel. Since Daniel's prophecies deal with history, often in detail, knowledge of history is important too.

All the signs in the world around us indicate that we're living in the last days of earth's history—in the feet and toes of a statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream (see the next section). Where can we find God's plan for us in these last days? Where can we receive the motivation, commitment, and faith to get through them? The prophecies God gave Daniel point the way ... D

Daniel 2: A Great Image

God Reveals the Future

> *He changes the times and the seasons;*
> *He removes kings and raises up kings; ...*
> *He reveals deep and secret things;*
> *He knows what is in the darkness,*
> *And light dwells with Him.*
> —DANIEL 2:21–23

DANIEL 2 HAS BEEN CALLED THE FOUNDATION OF BIBLE PROPHECY. IN FACT, MANY OTHER PROPHECIES IN DANIEL AND REVELATION PROVIDE MORE DETAILS ON DANIEL 2. IF YOU UNDERSTAND THIS PROPHECY, YOU ARE WELL ON YOUR WAY TO MASTERING THE BIG PICTURE OF BIBLE PROPHECY.

Daniel 2 begins with a story about King Nebuchadnezzar.

The monarch had a vivid dream that greatly impressed him. He knew it was important, but when he woke, he couldn't remember the particulars of the dream ... never mind trying to figure out what it meant. He called in the best of his advisors, but they couldn't tell him what he had dreamed—even on threat of death. They had to admit that "there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (verse 11).

When Daniel heard about this situation, he knew that God was the only hope of an answer. So he and his friends prayed, and God answered their prayers by revealing "the secret" (v. 19) to Daniel in a vision at night.

Daniel succeeded where the wisest men of Babylon failed because of his connection to "the God in heaven who reveals secrets" (v. 28). Nebuchadnezzar's later endorsement (see vs. 46–49) of Daniel helps establish the credibility of the rest of what Daniel wrote in the book. The God who "gives wisdom to the wise" gave Daniel "wisdom and might" (vs. 21, 23).

What You'll Learn

- How God revealed the political future of the world through a dream
- Where that dream has been verified by history
- What will be the last kingdom to rule before the end of the world



The prophetic statue of Daniel 2, representing the various kingdoms of the earth through history.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream described in Daniel 2 occurred around 603 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar's Question

Daniel introduced the dream itself and the prophecy it contained by telling us the question that was on King Nebuchadnezzar's mind when he went to bed that night:

> "As for you, O King, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about *what would come to pass after this;* and He who reveals secrets [God] has made known to you what will be" (v. 29, emphasis supplied).

The previous verse puts it this way: The "God in heaven ... has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar *what will be in the latter days*" (emphasis supplied). The primary concern of this prophecy, in other words, is how this world will end.

Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said, dreamed of a great image—a statue. This statue was made up of five parts:

- A head made of gold
- Chest and arms of silver
- A belly and thighs of bronze
- Legs of iron
- Feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

Nebuchadnezzar then saw a stone cut out "without hands." The stone struck the statue on its feet and ground it into dust, which the wind blew away. Then the stone grew until it filled the whole earth (vs. 32–35).

What did this dream of an awesome statue reveal about the future? We don't have to guess, because God gave Daniel a full explanation for the king.

Daniel began his interpretation of the dream by telling Nebuchadnezzar what the head of gold represented: Nebuchadnezzar himself and, more broadly, the kingdom he ruled (v. 38; compare Daniel 7:17, 23). Each section of the image below

Why Kingdoms? *Nebuchadnezzar's interest lay in politics, the realm of nations and armies and rulers. So that's what this prophecy covers—the political history of the world from Nebuchadnezzar's time right down to the end of the world. Of course, God is interested in much more than political history: He's concerned about the religious realm on earth, because that determines people's eternal destiny. And that's really what the rest of the prophecies in Daniel's book are about; Daniel 2 lays the foundation of history on which the other prophecies are built.*

the head, in turn, represented a kingdom that would displace the one that preceded it:

> "After you shall a rise another kingdom, inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom. ... And the fourth kingdom ... will break in pieces and crush all the others" (vs. 39, 40).

In a later chapter, Daniel specifically names the two kingdoms that would succeed Babylon: Media/Persia (the Persian Empire, also known as Medo-Persia) and Greece (see Daniel 8:20, 21).

An Unexpected Turn

After describing four world empires that rise and fall, the prophecy takes an unexpected turn. Each of the first three kingdoms was displaced by a more powerful one; some ruler of another country would defeat the current ruling kingdom. But with the fourth kingdom, the pattern was broken. Rather than being defeated by some single, superior power, this "kingdom shall be divided ... just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay" (v. 41).

The kingdom that was divided was Rome.

In other words, the fourth kingdom was to be broken up into a number of smaller powers, some strong and some weak.

Daniel then described efforts to bind these powers into a single empire—even to the extent of mixing "with one another in marriage" (v. 23 NRSV). But these efforts would fail: "They will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay" (v. 43).

History confirms the accuracy of the prophetic picture Daniel painted. The empire of Babylon was followed by those of Persia, Greece, and Rome. But then, rather than falling to some more powerful kingdom, the Roman Empire disintegrated into pieces—the nations that now make up much of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.

Since then, many rulers—among them, Charlemagne, Charles V of Spain, Napoleon, and Hitler—have tried to merge the pieces of Europe back together to form another empire. They've tried political and military approaches and even, as Daniel pointed out, intermarriage. But no one has been successful, just as prophecy foretold.

Some Bible scholars say it would take more than a united Europe to prove this prophecy wrong. The world God spoke of through Daniel's prophecy comprises the part of the globe where His people lived. Since Christians today are found throughout the world, only a kingdom that unites all the earth's nations into one political entity would falsify this prophecy.

By the 19th century, attempts to unite the nations of Europe by intermarriage among the royal families had made these families nearly all interrelated.

The Prophecy's Climax

In the last verses of Daniel 2, his interpretation of the dream reaches its climax.

There will come one final world empire—but not built by human effort; this kingdom will be made "without hands" (v. 45). It will, in fact, obliterate and entirely replace all human kingdoms (see vs. 35, 44). God Himself will establish this kingdom that "shall never be destroyed," but "shall stand forever" (v. 44).

In these words, God told Nebuchadnezzar, and us, the true focus and end of earth's history. Human empires may for a moment have a degree of power and influence. But from the perspective of heaven, they are temporary, transitory. Ultimately, God's kingdom will triumph.

The point—only implied here but specifically stated later in Daniel's prophecies—is that God's people might be downtrodden for now. They might for the moment be subject to the powers of earth. But in the end they will share in God's triumph, His rule—the kingdom that will "stand forever." Would you like to be a part of God's kingdom? D

What About the Rest of the World?

In what sense do Daniel's prophecies foretell the "history of the world" if they don't even mention such world powers as China or America? The answer lies in God's purpose for prophecy. The Lord did not intend to provide us an unabridged history of the world, but rather a roadmap to eternal life by focusing on those people who were called to be His representatives on earth. The "world" of Bible prophecy is really the world of God's people. In Old Testament times, that meant Israel and the nations that had an impact on it. However, since New Testament times, Christianity has spread its influence worldwide. So in prophecies that extend into the New Testament era, the "world" encompasses the entire globe.


JERUSALEM
SYRIA
NINEVEH
ASSYRIA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
PHOENICIA
BABYLON
JUDAH
MESOPOTAMIA
TAIMA
ARABIA
EGYPT
RED SEA
PERSIAN GULF
Babylonian Empire 606–539 B.C.
BYZANTIUM
BLACK SEA
GREECE
LYDIA
TYRE
HARAN
BACTRIA
JERUSALEM
SIDON
MEDIA
PARTHIA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
BABYLON
PERSEPOLIS
LIBYA
ARABIA
PERSIS
EGYPT
PERSIAN GULF
RED SEA
ARABIAN SEA
Medo-Persian Empire 539–331 B.C.
BLACK SEA
GREECE
ANCYRA
CASPIAN SEA
SACAE
ATHENS
PHRYGIA
ARMENIA
NINEVEH
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
DAMASCUS
MEDIA
JERUSALEM
ARIANA
BABYLON
ALEXANDRIA
ASSYRIA
LIBYA
PERSEPOLIS
ARACHOSIA
INDIA
ARABIA
PERSIA
GEDROCIA
PERSIAN GULF
EGYPT
PATALA
RED SEA
Greek Empire 331–168 B.C.
LONDON
BRITAIN
Roman Empire 168 B.C.–A.D. 476
BELGICA
GERMANIA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
GAUL
NORICUM
ROME
LUSITANIA
DALMATIA
BYZANTIUM
ITALY
BLACK SEA
TARENTUM
PERGAMUM
MACEDONIA
LUSITANIA
PONTUS
SYRACUSE
ATHENS
BAETICA
GALATIA
CAPPADOCIA
CARTHAGE
ACHAEA
SYRIA
PARTHIAN EMPIRE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
MAURITANIA
NUMIDIA
JERUSALEM
CYRENE
BABYLON
ALEXANDRIA
JUDEA
AFRICA
CYRENE
EGYPT

Daniel 7: Four Beasts and a Little Horn

Trial and Triumph

Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

—MATTHEW 26:64

What You'll Learn

How God revealed the future of the world through a dream

Where that dream has been verified by history

What religious power would rule the world

DANIEL 2 TELLS HOW GOD REVEALED THE FUTURE THROUGH A DREAM HE GAVE KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR. IN DANIEL 7, THE NEXT MAJOR PROPHECY, GOD REVEALS MORE OF THE FUTURE—BUT THIS TIME, DANIEL HIMSELF HAS THE DREAM.

When God sent a dream to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2, He revealed the political history of the world. In chapter 7, God also speaks to Daniel, the prophet of His people, through a dream. It reveals the history of the world and the story of the people who were to preserve and share His good news of salvation.

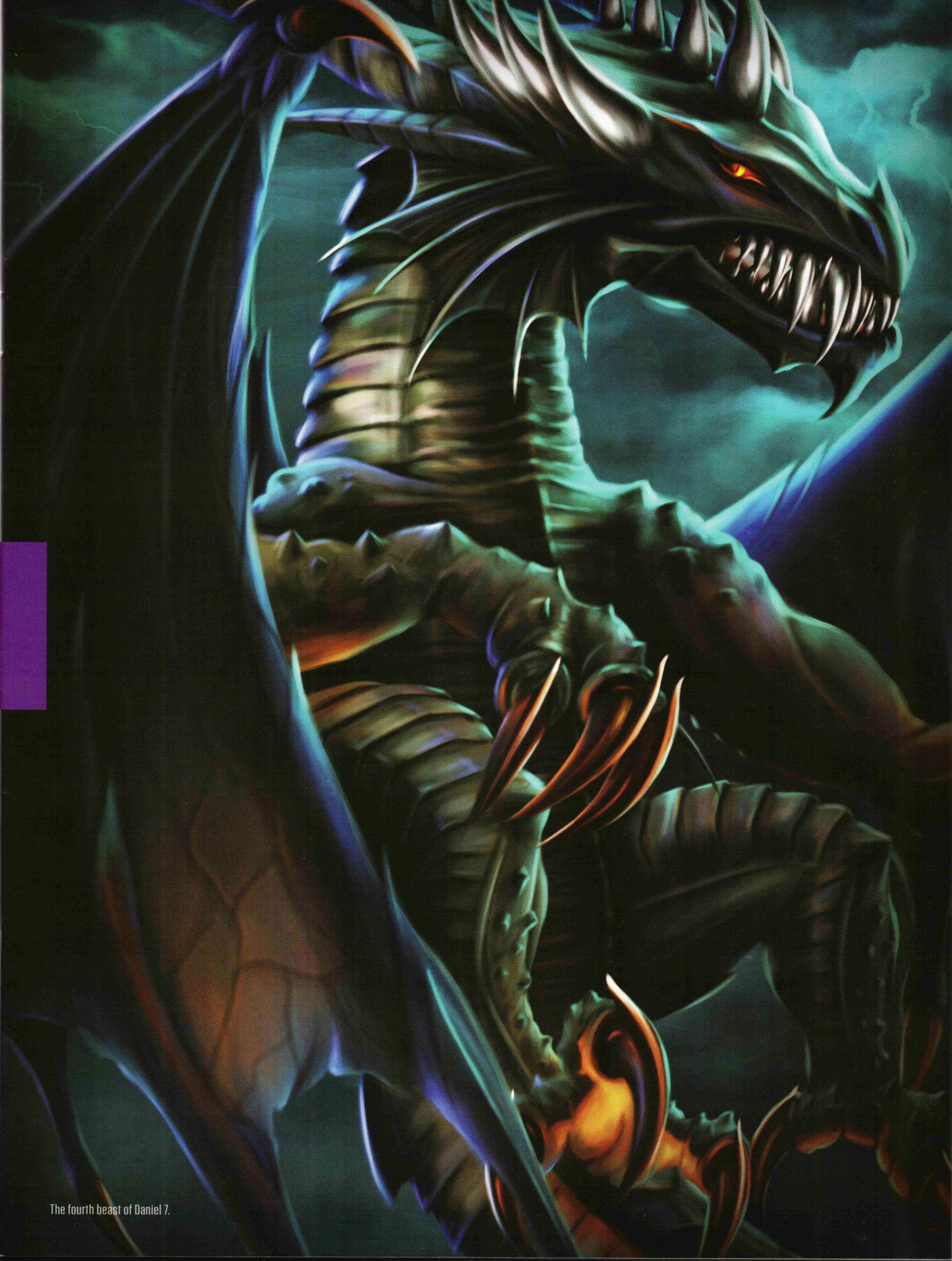
Like the prophecy of Daniel 2, the prophecy of Daniel 7 comes in two parts: First a dream, and second, the interpretation. While Nebuchadnezzar's dream was relatively benign, Daniel saw stormy seas from which arose "four great beasts," all of which were fierce predators. Fascinated and probably horrified by the fourth beast, Daniel watched as three of its ten horns were plucked up, and another horn, "a little one," took their place.

Daniel's dream ended with a courtroom scene. Someone he called "the Ancient of Days" was seated as judge, books were opened, and the beasts were condemned and their dominion taken away (vs. 9–13). Then Daniel saw the Ancient of Days give "One like the Son of Man ... dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him" (vs. 13, 14).

In the New Testament, Jesus calls Himself the "Son of man" more than 40 times, and in Matthew 26:64, He indirectly indicates that He is the Son of man of Daniel 7.

A Familiar Story

After reading Daniel 2, Daniel 7 should seem somewhat familiar to you. God used different images in the vision of Daniel 7 to tell the same basic story of the vision found



The fourth beast of Daniel 7.

in Daniel 2, while adding more details and a different perspective.

The four beasts in Daniel correspond to the four divisions of the statue in Daniel 2, representing four kingdoms (see vs. 17, 23). The **WINGED LION** of chapter 7 corresponds with the head of gold, which represented Babylon, in chapter 2.

The **BEAR** represented the next empire, Medo-Persia. The three ribs in its mouth stood for the three kingdoms this coalition defeated in its rise to power: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. It was "raised up on one side," which symbolized the Persians' eventual dominance over the Medes.

The **LEOPARD WITH FOUR WINGS**—what could be faster?—served as a fitting depiction of the speed of Alexander the Great's conquests as he established the Greek Empire. The leopard's four heads represented the parts into which that empire was divided upon Alexander's death.

The **FOURTH BEAST**, with its "**HUGE IRON TEETH**," represented the Roman Empire, which followed Greece as the major power in the Western world. And just as the iron empire in Daniel 2 fragmented into feet of iron and clay, so the fourth beast here divides into a group of horns. The ten horns symbolized the nations that grew out of the Roman Empire as it aged, and invading Germanic tribes melded into it (see v. 24).

Daniel 7 has one final and crucial similarity to Daniel 2. That earlier chapter ends with dominion being taken from all the earthly powers and being given "forever" to the kingdom that God establishes. Likewise, the vision of Daniel 7 concludes with the assurance that the kingdom God establishes will be "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (v. 14).

The Angel's Assurance

Perhaps you've noticed that all the beasts in Daniel 7 are carnivorous. Daniel was concerned about the threat they represented, as he asked one of those "standing by" (probably an angel) the meaning of what he was seeing. That person answered with a two-sentence summary of the point of this whole chapter:

> "Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever" (vs. 17, 18).

In other words, believers will face some difficult times, but in the end, God will accomplish His purposes. He will establish His kingdom, and His people will share in His victory.

Daniel obviously appreciated that reassurance, but he was still curious about that fourth nondescript beast and its horns—particularly the "little horn" that had eyes and a mouth and that "was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them" (v. 21).

In the Bible, the term saints simply means "God's people, believers." It doesn't refer only to a few ultra-righteous individuals.

Just who or what did this horn represent? Daniel tells us several things about this entity that help us identify it:

1. Chronologically, it rose to power in the time of the 10 kings or nations—that is, sometime after the demise of the Roman Empire.



The winged lion, or lamassu, was a common decorative motif in Babylon and has been identified on many archaeological finds.

A lamassu, a human-headed winged bull, relief from the palace of King Sargon II at Dur-Sharrukin in Assyria (present day Khorsabad in Iraq), ca. 713–716 B.C. Department of Oriental Antiquities, Richelieu.



The winged lion and the bear with three ribs in its mouth.

2. Daniel saw that three of the horns were "plucked out by the roots," or subdued, to make way for this little horn, whose appearance was to become "greater than his fellows" (vs. 8, 20, 24).

3. The angel who interpreted the dream for Daniel said the little horn would be "different" from the first horns, probably in that it would have eyes and a mouth speaking "pompous words against the Most High"—against God, in other words.

4. The horn would also "persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law." Obviously, the fact that human laws change isn't noteworthy; humans change human laws all the time. These "times and law," however, are ones established by God and are untouchable to humans.

5. And finally, the interpreter gave Daniel a specific time period during which this horn would hold sway: "a time and times and half a time" (vs. 8, 24, 25).

The fact that it was a horn, like the other horns, suggests that it was a political power. But the fact that this horn was "different" from the others suggests that it was something more than a political entity. Its difference had to do with religion, since this horn practices blasphemy, persecution of God's people, and the changing of God's law.

The Horn's Identity

How might we identify this little horn power? Consider the following questions: What religious-political power arose during the decline of the Roman Empire?

The medieval Christian church, Papal Rome, which through nearly all its existence has claimed to be a political state as well as a church.

How certain can we be?

Were three of the Germanic tribes that displaced the Roman Empire "uprooted" so this church could flourish? Yes. The Heruls, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths—all of

which professed Arianism, a form of Christianity that was competing with the Roman Church for supremacy in Western Europe—were overrun.

Though this section focuses on the church of the West, we must not forget that there was also apostasy and persecution of the church of the East.

Did the medieval Roman church persecute? Yes. More believers died for their religious convictions under persecutions, such as the Inquisition and the massacre in France on St. Bartholomew's Day, under the papal Roman Empire than by any other religious hand.

What about the "pompous words against the Most High"? The leaders of this institution didn't attack God directly; in fact, they claimed to be serving Him. But they did usurp God's authority by claiming it for themselves. At the Fifth Lateran Council (1512), for instance, it was declared concerning the pope, "Thou art another God on earth." In the encyclical letter "On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens," dated January 10, 1890, Pope Leo VIII declared, "The supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds therefore, requires ... complete submission ... to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself." And on June 20, 1894, in "The Reunion of Christendom," the same pope claimed, "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."

Did this church power attempt to change God's "times and law"? Yes. Petrus de Ancharano, for example, asserted: "'The pope can modify divine law, since his power is not of man, but of God, and he acts in the place of God upon earth'" (In Council. 373, no. 3 verso- see Lucius Ferraris, "Papa," art. 2, Prompta Bibliotheca, Venice: Gaspar Storti, 1772, 6:29).

The church went beyond simply claiming this power; it attempted to use it. The fourth of the Ten Commandments, God's law, specifies the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath—the day on which God's people are to refrain from work, the day on which they are to worship. Notice what, according to its own tenants, the church claims:

> "Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her—she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority" (Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism*, 3rd American ed, New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1876, pg. 174).

In other words, this religious-political power openly admits it has attempted to change the very part of God's law that has to do with time.

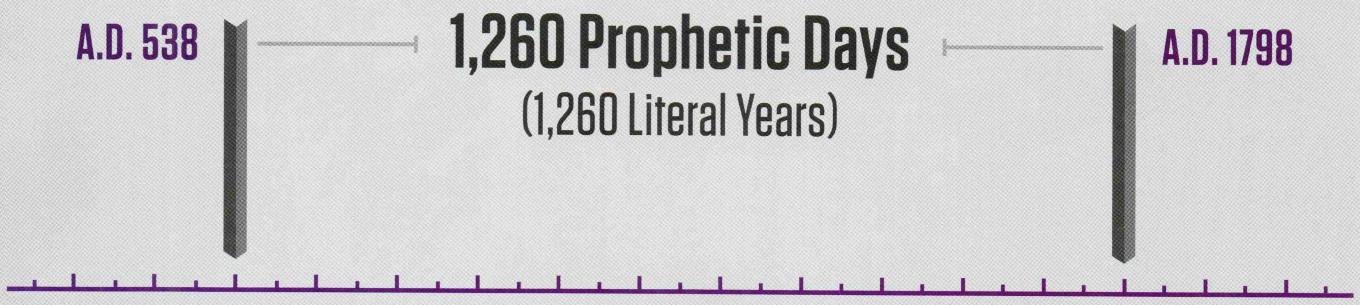
The final identifying mark of the little-horn power is the "time and times and half a time" that Daniel 7 specifies for its period of dominance. The chart at the top of the next page shows the fulfillment of this part of the prophecy, confirming the identity of the little-horn power.

The book of Revelation indicates that after a brief hiatus, this power also figures prominently in last-day events.



Leopard with four heads and four wings.

"Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time." —Daniel 7:25



Revelation 12:6, 14 *makes it clear that Daniel's "time and times and half a time" is 1,260 symbolic days (each "time" is a 360-day year). And in the Bible, a symbolic day is a literal year (see Ezekiel 4:5, 6, and the sidebar "Daniel 9 Confirms Daniel 8," p. 33).*

As for the starting and ending dates of this prophecy: The emperor of the eastern remnant of the Roman Empire decreed the bishop of Rome head of all Christian churches. This decree became effective in A.D. 538 with the defeat of the last of the Arian powers that had ruled much of the western remnants of the empire (including Italy). This 1,260-year time span saw most of the persecution that Christians have endured throughout history. It ended in 1798, when Napoleon's general Berthier took the pope prisoner and proclaimed his political rule at an end.

Like Daniel 2, chapter 7 foretells the history of the world. We see the four empires and their ultimate destruction by God's eternal kingdom. But Daniel 7 focuses on spiritual, rather than political, history. In it we see the rise of a religious-political power that works against God, attempting to change His law and actively persecuting His people.

However, Daniel's dream offers the assurance that this power's dominance won't last forever. A judgment day is coming when those who persecute will be defeated. On that day, "the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High." Their kingdom, His kingdom, will be an everlasting kingdom.

Is the Little Horn "Antichrist"?

The little horn of Daniel 7 blasphemes God and persecutes His people. Could it also be the antichrist?

The Old Testament doesn't use the term *antichrist* at all, and the New Testament uses it only a few times. The term combines two Greek words: the preposition *anti* and the noun *christ*. *Anti* can carry the familiar meaning "against," but it can also mean "in place of"—which fits the biblical usage more precisely. Antichrist opposes Christ, but it does so specifically by trying to fill the position only Christ should fill in our spiritual lives. Antichrist, in other words, plays god.

Several New Testament passages help flesh out the picture of antichrist. In 2 Thessalonians 2, the apostle Paul prophesied that this power would be instrumental in the great Christian apostasy (which both Daniel and Revelation also picture) that would occur before Christ's second coming. As predicted, during the Middle Ages, heresies, immorality, and corruption abounded in the church's power center, as well as among the various cults and offshoots that arose from it.

In one of the four Bible verses that use the term *antichrist*, the apostle John wrote that there are "many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). This term, then, doesn't point to any single person or organization. Every person or institution that tries to take the place of God, or the Messiah, or that coerces people to follow it shows that it bears the spirit of antichrist. Here the medieval Catholic Church, with its Inquisition, stands condemned—but so do those Protestants who, as soon as they had the political and military power to do so, forced their religion on the population under their control.

Revelation confirms this picture of the two basic characteristics of antichrist: the desire to displace God and the willingness to coerce religious practices (see Revelation 13). And it, too, portrays a multifaceted antichrist, picturing the "dragon," the "beast," and the "false prophet" as bearing that character. (See chapter 12. Notice that these figures are modeled on Daniel's beasts of chapter 7.) The "dragon," Satan, is the ultimate antichrist, whose spirit animates all the others.

So is the little horn antichrist? Yes—or more correctly, it's one of them, a major one.

Daniel 8: A Ram, a Goat



For two thousand three hundred days;
then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.
—Daniel 8:14

and Another Little Horn

Good and Evil Go Head to Head

What You'll Learn

More details about the rise and fall of nations

Uncover more about the Little Horn power

The purpose of the Jewish sanctuary

CHAPTER 8 CONTAINS THE CENTRAL PROPHETIC VISION OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL. ALL THAT PRECEDES IT IS PRELIMINARY; ALL THAT FOLLOWS IS AN EXPLANATION OF IT. THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL 8 IS, IN FACT, THE LAST SYMBOLIC PROPHECY IN THE BOOK. THE VISIONS IN THE CHAPTERS THAT FOLLOW SIMPLY EXPLAIN AND EXPAND ON WHAT WAS REVEALED IN THIS VISION.

As in chapter 7, Daniel is the recipient of the vision—a dream that features more beasts. And like both the previous visions, this one comes in two parts: first the action in symbols and then an explanation by a heaven-sent interpreter.

Daniel wrote that, in this vision, he saw by a river near which he was standing a two-horned ram that pushed westward, northward, and southward. He said no beast could "withstand" this ram. He "did according to his will and became great" (v. 4).

Then a male goat with "a notable horn between his eyes" came from the west, moving so fast that he didn't touch the ground (v. 5). The ram challenged the goat, with disastrous results: The goat utterly defeated him. For a while, the goat dominated the area. Soon, however, his notable horn was broken and four horns grew in its place.

As Daniel continued to watch, he saw another horn appear on the scene, "a little horn which grew exceedingly great" (v. 9). This horn challenged heaven itself and "the Prince of the host," God's sanctuary (or temple) and its sacrifices. And, Daniel wrote, this little horn "cast truth down to the ground" (vs. 10–12).

The prophetic drama ended with a conversation. A "holy one" asked how long the little horn's battle against heaven would go on—when it would end. And a second "holy one" replied:

> "For *two thousand three hundred* days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed" (v. 14).

Verses 13 and 14, but particularly verse 14, are the focus of this central chapter and thus of the whole book.

Gabriel's Commission

A "beast" in Bible prophecy represents a political power.

At this point the high drama had ended, but the vision had not. Daniel wrote that while he was trying to fathom what he had seen, he heard someone commission the angel Gabriel to "make this man understand the vision" (v. 16).

Gabriel began his explanation by telling Daniel the time this vision concerned: "the time of the end," "the latter time of the indignation" (vs. 17, 19). Then he began to identify the actors in the drama—and he couldn't have been more specific:

> "The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power" (vs. 20–22).

Gabriel is also the angelic being who appeared to Mary and revealed she would give birth to the Messiah.

As in the vision of the previous chapter, the animals here represent empires. In describing the two animals of chapter 8, Daniel gave a pocket history of the empires they represent. He said the ram that represented Medo-Persia had two horns, one of which "was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last" (verse 3).

Remember: The horn that was "higher than the other" is a similar symbol of the bear in chapter 7 that "was raised up on one side" (v. 5).

The Medes attained regional power before the Persians did. But the Persians soon overtook them and assumed the superior position in the empire.

Daniel's description of the Greek Empire is just as concise—and just as accurate. The goat with the notable horn came from the west, traveling so fast his feet didn't touch the ground (chapter 8:5).

Remember: The scene here reminds us of the portrayal of speed in chapter 7—the leopard that had four wings.

Gabriel said, "The large horn that is between its eyes"—the horn that was broken off when the goat was at the peak of its strength—"is the first king" (8:21; 8:8). This represents Alexander the Great, who, having founded the Greek Empire, died while still in his prime. The four horns that arose in his place are "four kingdoms [that] shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power" (verse 22).

These horns represent the Cassandrian, Lysimachian, Ptolemaic, and Seleucid kingdoms within the Greek Empire, which were established by Alexander's generals after his death.

Why the Differences?

As you've probably noticed, there are strong parallels between Daniel 8 and Daniel 2 and 7. (See also the chart on page 37.) But there are also enough differences to raise some questions ...

First, why does the vision of Daniel 8 begin with Medo-Persia and not Babylon? The answer lies in the fact that by the time God gave Daniel the vision of chapter 8, Medo-Persia was already casting its shadow over Babylon, whose rule was soon to end.

Second, why are the nations represented by domestic animals (rams, goats) in chapter 8 when chapter 7 pictured these empires as carnivorous beasts? Notice that the character of these creatures hasn't changed—they're still aggressive and domineering (see vs. 4, 7). But the focus of this chapter is on the sanctuary, God's temple. Rams and goats were sanctuary animals used as sacrifices in temple services. Their use here emphasizes the fact that God's place of worship plays a major role in this chapter.

Third, why does this vision jump directly from the Greek Empire to the little horn power, skipping over Rome from Daniel 2 and Daniel 7? To begin, we must observe that, just like the preceding two visions, this dream reaches all the way from Daniel's time to the end of the world (see vs. 17, 19). Next, we must note that in each of the preceding visions, the fourth power continues on in one form or another to the end of time: In chapter 2, the iron of the legs is diluted with clay in the feet, but it's still there. And the little horn in chapter 7 wouldn't be much of a threat if the beast from whose head it arose were dead.

In other words, both the beast in Daniel 7 and its horn—pagan and Christian Rome—have the same character and carry on the same activities; that is, aggression against God and His people. They both do the work of antichrist. Chapter 7 portrays that antichrist role through the little horn. That's why God chose to use the same symbol in chapter 8—*but in this prophecy the horn represents both phases of the world's fourth great power up to the time of its destruction.* Like Daniel 7's fourth beast, Daniel 8's little horn is "fierce" and "mighty" and destroys "many" (8:23–25; 7:7, 19, 23). And like the little horn in Daniel 7, Daniel 8's little horn becomes great (8:9; 7:20). He magnifies himself in his heart (8:25; 7:8, 25) and persecutes the saints (8:24; 7:21, 25).



Investigating the Little Horn

Daniel 8 adds even more detail about the little horn's activities and its intentions, making its identity as antichrist even more apparent.

In the first place, Daniel ties the little horn to the original antichrist, Satan himself, who caused some of the angels to fall into sin (compare verses 10 and 11 with Isaiah 14:12–14; Revelation 1:20; 12:4, 7–9).

Remember: The term antichrist can carry the familiar meaning "against," but it can also mean "in place of"—which fits the biblical usage here more precisely.

In its description of the little horn's opposition to the "Prince of the host" and the sanctuary and its services (the daily sacrifices, etc.), Daniel 8 sees the future work of both pagan and Christian Rome. Pagan Rome literally destroyed God's earthly sanctuary, the temple in Jerusalem, when it put down the Jewish rebellion in A.D. 70. It was also responsible for Jesus' crucifixion and for later persecutions of His followers.

Ancient Greek Corinthian helmet.
Molded out of bronze.







Clockwise: Alexander the Great ancient Greek Tetradrachm, circa 315 B.C. Darius II King of Persia. Facing page: The two-horned ram and the male goat.

Unlike pagan Rome, Christian Rome's opposition to God, His sanctuary, and His people was often more subtle—though, of course, Christian Rome did carry out a vigorous and very literal persecution of believers.

Some statements in chapter 8 make it clear that this power worked through deception: "He cast truth down to the ground," "through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand" (vs. 12, 25). Basically, Christian Rome's deceit involved counterfeiting ...

- **It substituted a counterfeit Sabbath** for the Sabbath of God's Ten Commandments (see pg. 20).
- **It substituted a counterfeit system of priests and saints** for Christ's mediation on our behalf (compare 1 Timothy 2:5).
- **It substituted a counterfeit sacrifice** for the sacrifice of Christ. (It claims that the daily mass is "one and the same Sacrifice as that of the cross" [See Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests, John A. McHugh and Charles J. Calla n, trans. New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1934, 258, 259.], while the Bible emphasizes that Christ's death on the cross was a one-time event. See Hebrews 9:25–28.)
- **It substituted a counterfeit gospel** for the true gospel, making our salvation a matter of works—of pilgrimages and penances and indulgences—rather than of resting in faith in what Christ has done for us.

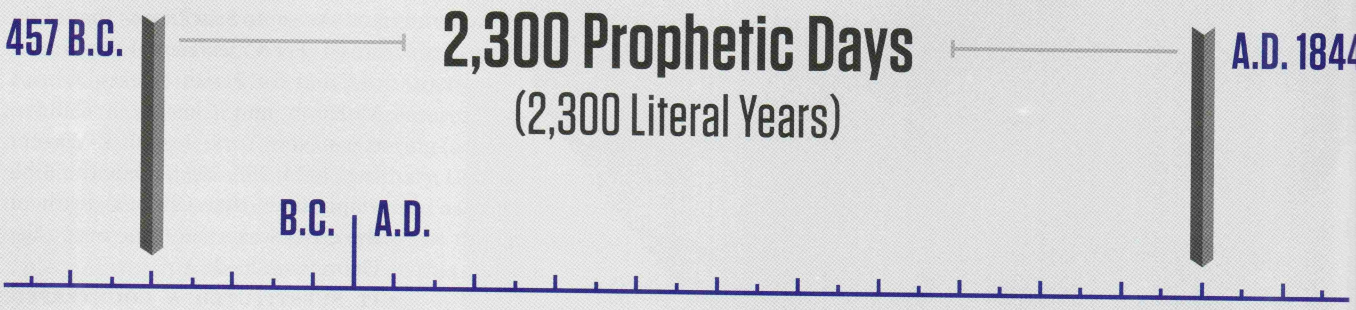
The Little Horn's End

The vision of Daniel 8 ends on a similar note to that of the visions in Daniel chapters 2 and 7. Like the statue of chapter 2, the little horn is "broken without human hand" (8:25). Verse 14, the central verse of both the chapter and the book, explains that the little horn's depredations end with the "cleansing" of the sanctuary—or as other versions translate it, the "restoring" of the sanctuary.

These words carry a complex of ideas. The sanctuary was the place of mediation, of salvation (see sidebar on next page). The "restoring" of the sanctuary implies that it is once again functioning as God originally intended it to run—that the deceptions of the little horn have been unmasked, the antichrist having been unveiled, and that people are turning to Christ as their mediator; they've found again the gospel of righteousness by faith.

The "cleansing" of the sanctuary implies the end-time fulfillment in real life of an ancient Hebrew ceremony. God gave the sanctuary and its sacrificial system to Israel as a living illustration of His plan for saving sinners from death. This system of worship culminated in a special service that took place on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16). On that day, the sanctuary—and by implication, its worshipers—was to be cleansed from all the sins people had confessed there





Daniel 8:14: *"For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."*

This prophetic period began in 457 B.C. with Persian Emperor Artaxerxes' decree authorizing the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It stretched to 1844—a year that was to see the beginning of the cleansing, or "restoration," of the heavenly sanctuary and a change in Christ's ministry there.

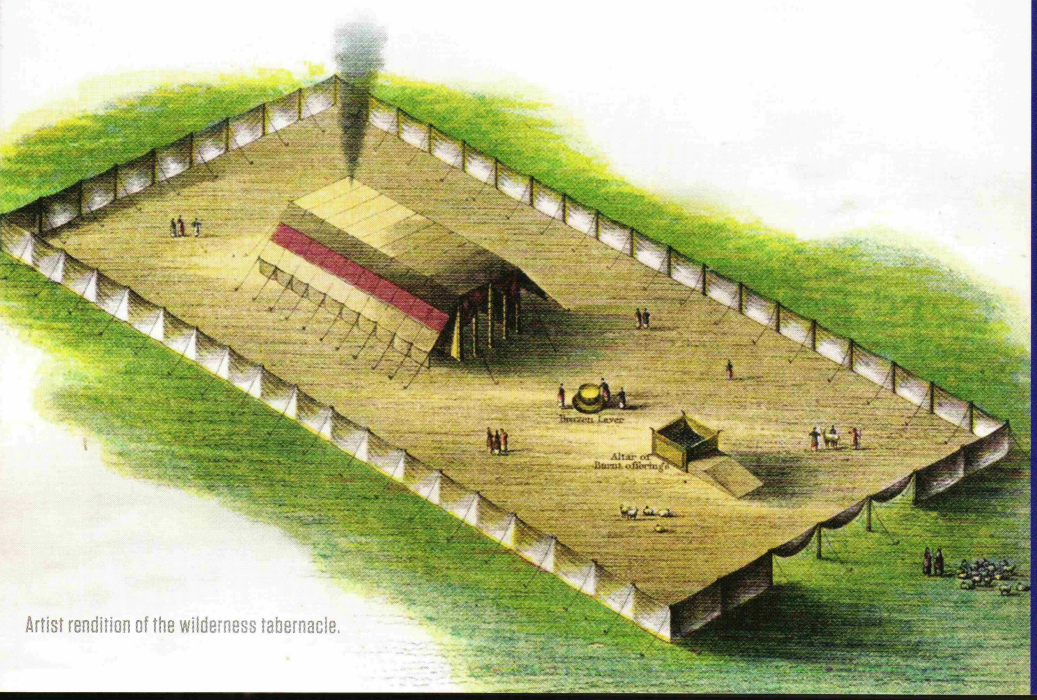
through the previous year. On that day, no one was to work; all were to participate in the service. Anyone who ignored the service was deemed to have thereby declared that he or she had no need of God and was no longer considered one of His people, no longer a part of Israel. In other words, this day of cleansing was also a day of judgment.

As the New Testament book of Hebrews points out, these Old Testament services reveal Christ's ministry for us today. The Day of Atonement, which ended the religious year for the Israelites, speaks to us of the Day of Judgment that will end this world's history. Daniel chapter 7 says that it is this judgment that will bring the little horn—antichrist—to an end, free God's people from evil, and place them in His eternal kingdom.

The symbolic part of the vision of chapter 8 ends with a question and an answer. The question is: How long is it going to be until that restoration, that cleansing? The answer is quite specific: "Two thousand three hundred evening-mornings" (v. 14).

As this chapter closes, Gabriel confirms the accuracy of this prophecy. He says, "The vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true" (v. 26). He's about to explain this to Daniel, when Daniel, perhaps overcome at the thought that justice won't be done until "many days in the future" (v. 26), faints. So the chapter ends with the words, "I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it" (v. 27), which was Daniel's way of saying, "To be continued ..." Chapter 9 will unlock the mystery of the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14.

The Day of Atonement and the sanctuary service are worth learning about because they are symbols of the work of Jesus Christ.



Artist rendition of the wilderness tabernacle.

What Is the Sanctuary?

The whole book of Daniel centers on the statement in chapter 8:14: "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

Just what is this "sanctuary"?

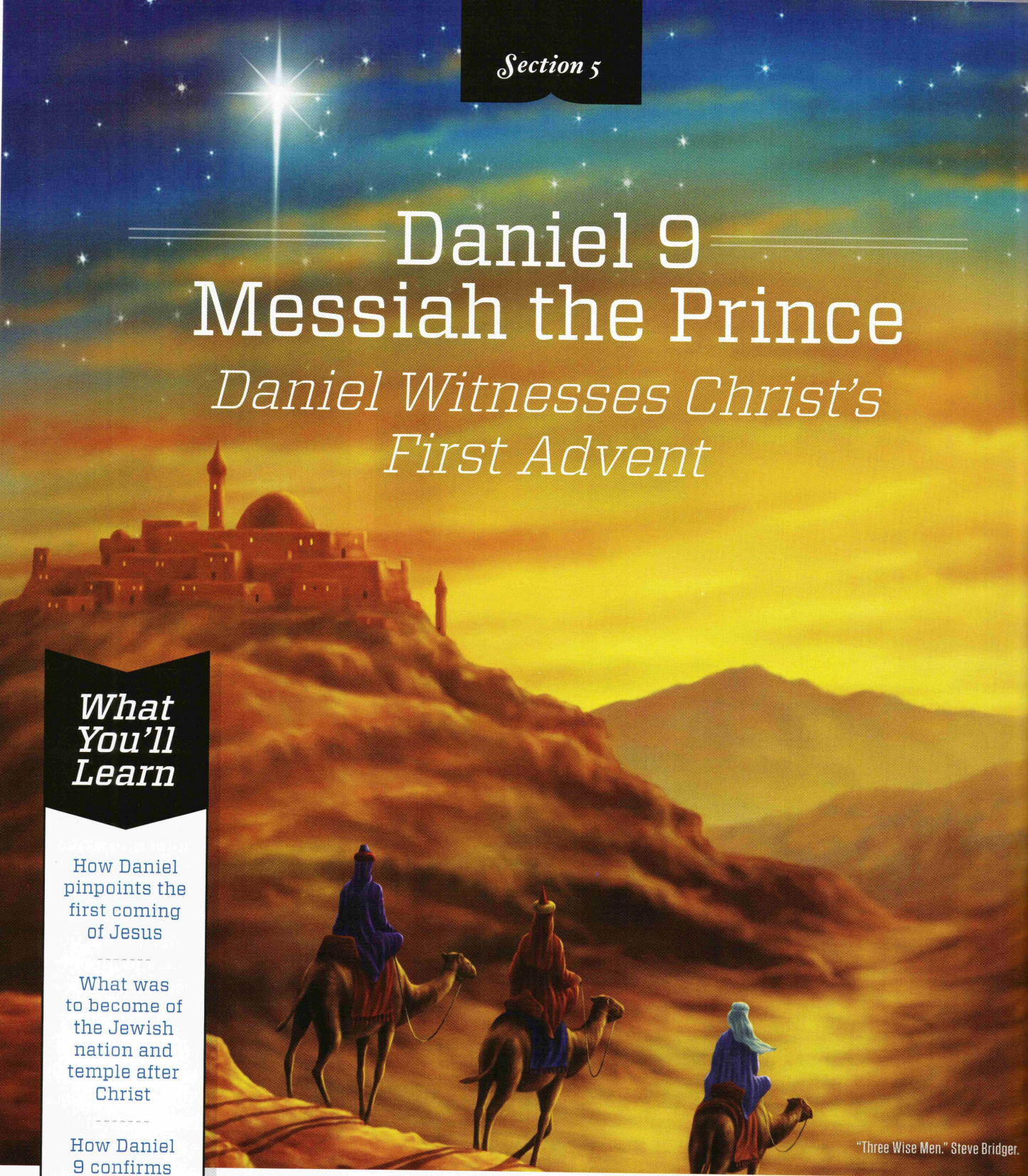
At the same time God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, He gave him plans for a portable structure that was to be the center for Israel's worship (see Exodus 25). God also told Moses what services were to be carried out in this building and in the temple that succeeded it when Israel eventually settled in Palestine. Through these services, He intended people to learn about His plan for saving them from sin and its ultimate consequence, eternal death.

As Daniel 9 shows, however, the prophecy of chapter 8:14 extends well into the 19th century. Neither Israel's wilderness sanctuary nor its permanent temples existed at that time. Obviously, then, God had something else in mind—and the New Testament book of Hebrews tells us what.

Hebrews says that none of Israel's services could actually clear the worshipers' consciences before God (Hebrews 9:9). They were merely copies (or illustrations) of Christ's work to save sinners—which was to be carried out in the true sanctuary, which is in heaven (see 9:11, 23). It is this heavenly sanctuary to which Daniel 8:14 speaks.

Daniel 9
Messiah the Prince

Daniel Witnesses Christ's First Advent



"Three Wise Men." Steve Bridger.

What You'll Learn

- How Daniel pinpoints the first coming of Jesus
- What was to become of the Jewish nation and temple after Christ
- How Daniel 9 confirms Daniel 8
- What happened in 1844

> *And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand."*
>
> —Daniel 9:22

DANIEL 9 CONTAINS WHAT MANY BELIEVERS CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST SUBLIME PROPHECY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT—A PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH, JESUS CHRIST. AMAZINGLY, NOT ONLY DID THIS PROPHECY LAY OUT THE PURPOSE OF HIS INCARNATION, BUT IT ALSO SPECIFIED WHEN HIS MINISTRY WOULD BEGIN AND END.

The prophecy of Daniel 9 differs significantly from those of chapters 2, 7, and 8. In this chapter, there are no symbols—no statues and stones, no beasts and horns, no "times" or "evening-mornings." The language, while still rather cryptic in places, is to be taken literally.

In Daniel 9, the angel Gabriel continues his explanation of the symbolic vision given in chapter 8—an explanation that had been interrupted when Daniel passed out.

Remember that Daniel 8:13 and 14 contain the conclusion and climax of that chapter's vision. It is also the central point of Daniel's book. Daniel wrote that when this vision ended, Gabriel was ordered to "make this man understand the vision" (8:16).

Gabriel proceeded with an explanation of the beasts and horns, but when he tried to explain the 2,300 "evenings and mornings" (v. 26), Daniel passed out. Gabriel had only partially fulfilled his commission to explain the vision to Daniel.

The last vision Daniel had seen said that 2,300 "evening-mornings [days]" would pass till the sanctuary would be restored (8:14). Daniel probably knew that in symbolic prophecy, days represent years. So he must have been wondering if that prophecy meant that God had changed His mind since Jeremiah's time—in other words, did it mean that Jerusalem and the temple would continue to lie desolate for 23 more centuries?

Daniel knew that earlier prophets had warned that the sinful unfaithfulness of God's people would bring about Jerusalem's destruction. He also knew that those same prophets had said that Jerusalem would be restored when God's people repented. So, anxious to see God's people and the temple restored, Daniel prayed a beautiful prayer of confession and repentance that fills most of chapter 9. (Please take the time to read it for yourself!)

God responded to Daniel's prayer quickly: "While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel ... reached me" (v. 21). This, of course, was the same Gabriel who had been helping Daniel understand the vision of chapter 8. Daniel wrote that Gabriel told him he had again been commissioned to give him "skill to understand ... the vision" (v. 22, 23). There is no vision in chapter 9, so Gabriel is clearly referring to the vision of chapter 8, which he had not yet fully explained. These two chapters are linked—particularly in the time elements involved.

Gabriel's Explanation

Four compact but loaded verses—chapter 9:24-27—contain Gabriel's explanation. Verse 24 serves as an introduction to the ideas contained in the next three verses. It specifies the time involved and what God planned to achieve during that time.

Gabriel started his explanation by referring to a period of "seventy weeks," or as the Bible margins explain, "seventy sevens." During this period the city, its wall, and its temple would be rebuilt and the Messiah would come. However, the rebuilding of the temple alone took about four years (see Ezra 4:24–5:2; 6:15), which would be 208 weeks, so it's clear that something more than 70 literal weeks was involved.

Sure enough, the Hebrew in which Daniel wrote this phrase implies what the Revised Standard Version translates as "seventy weeks of years." Daniel had been concerned about Jeremiah's "seventy years," but Gabriel turned his attention to a period seven times longer— "seventy weeks of years," or 490 years.

In biblical prophetic language, a day equals one year.

Why Did Daniel Pass Out? *About 10 years passed between the vision of Daniel 8 and the one in chapter 9. By that time, it had been a little more than 45 years since Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and had taken its people captive to Babylon. This caused Daniel to feel very distressed. He had understood from the book of Jeremiah that the "desolations of Jerusalem" would last 70 years (9:2). But that time was nearly completed, and no actions were being taken to rebuild the house of God or Jerusalem.*

The rest of verse 24 tells what was to happen during that 490 years:

First, that time was to be a probationary period for the Jews. Their sin in going their own way rather than doing what God asked them to do had resulted in the destruction of their city and temple by the Babylonians. Now, in Daniel 9:24, God said He would give them one more chance to fulfill the role He had originally planned for them.

Second, something special was to be done "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness." This is actually a picture of the work of Jesus—particularly His death and His ministry as the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, both of which are essential parts of God's plan to eradicate sin.

Remember: The heavenly sanctuary and Jesus' ministry were important parts of the prophecy in chapter 8.

Third, the fulfillment of this part of Gabriel's explanation was to "seal up vision and prophecy," confirming our faith in the accuracy of what Daniel wrote—particularly the prophecy of chapter 8.

And fourth, this period was to see the anointing of the "Most Holy." This term refers to the heavenly sanctuary. At His ascension, Jesus began His ministry for His people in that heavenly sanctuary, as the book of Hebrews makes clear.

Christ and Antichrist

Daniel 9:25–27 gives more details on the timing of Jesus' earthly ministry and death. These verses also reveal what was to happen to the city and temple that Daniel was so concerned about. And they relate all this to the antichrist power, which chapters 7 and 8 spoke about.

Each of these three verses divides into two parts. The first half deals with the time element and the Messiah, and the second half deals with the city, the sanctuary, and the antichrist, or desolator. This kind of alternation between two themes was a regular characteristic of Hebrew literature.

The horn powers of chapters 7 and 8 are the antichrist.

Verse 25 specifies the starting point for the time period involved: "the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem." There were three decrees by kings of the Persian Empire that provided for the return of the Jews to their land and for the restoration of Jerusalem. The decree that most closely fulfilled Gabriel's specification was the one Artaxerxes issued in 457 B.C.

Verse 25 then goes on to say that from this starting point "until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"—a total of 69 weeks.

The New Testament clearly and repeatedly says that Jesus is the Messiah. And the Gospel of Luke tells us specifically when He was anointed. It was at His baptism, when God Himself announced Jesus' role and when the Holy Spirit "anointed" Him by descending on Him in the form of a dove (see Luke 3:21, 22).

Luke not only tells us how Jesus was anointed, but he also tells us when Jesus was anointed. John the Baptist began his ministry "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea" (v. 1), and Jesus was baptized soon after. That puts His baptism in A.D. 27—exactly 483 years (69 "weeks of years") after 457 B.C.!

The next two verses in Gabriel's explanation say,

> "After the **sixty-two weeks** Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; ... Then He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (Daniel 9: 26, 27).

This 62-week period—which follows the seven-week period—ended with Jesus' baptism. Verse 26 then says that sometime after His baptism, Jesus would be cut off—that is, killed.

The next verse is even more specific: "In the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." Jesus' earthly ministry ended with His crucifixion in A.D. 31—three-and-a-half years after it began at His baptism. Jesus died in the middle of the seventieth "week" of Daniel's prophecy. And just as Gabriel told Daniel, His death brought an end to "sacrifice and offering" (see Hebrews 10:4–9).

When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple dividing the holy and most holy compartments was ripped in two, from top to bottom, signifying the end of the sacrificial system.

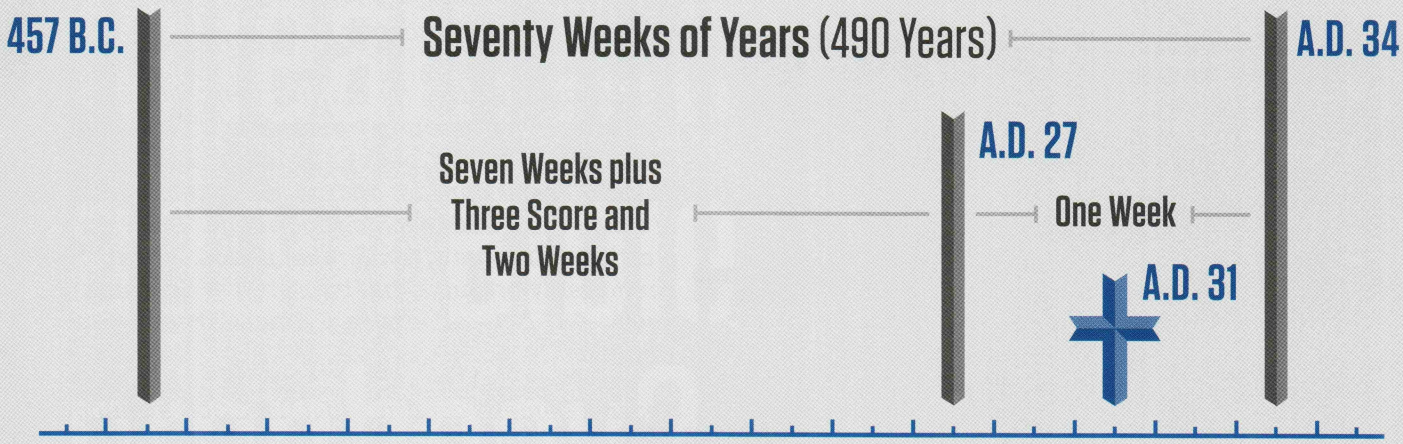
{See chart on facing page.}

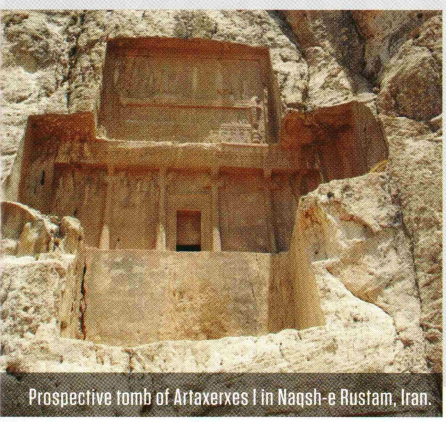
No Longer His Nation

Gabriel's explanation doesn't specify an event that would mark the end of the 490 years, but verse 24 does indicate that those years were a probationary period for the Jewish nation as God's special people. Unfortunately, instead of fulfilling

Hebrews 9 indicates that Jesus began His ministry by inaugurating, or "anointing," that sanctuary—much as Moses inaugurated the earthly sanctuary before Aaron started his work as high priest in it.

"Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your Holy city." —Daniel 9:24




Prospective tomb of Artaxerxes I in Naqsh-e Rustam, Iran.

Artaxerxes' decree authorizing the rebuilding of Jerusalem (457 B.C.) marks the beginning of this prophetic time period. In A.D. 27, at the beginning of the final seven years of the "seventy weeks of years," Jesus was baptized and His public ministry as the Messiah began. In the middle of the final week, in A.D. 31, He was crucified ("cut off," making "an end to sacrifice and offering"). And in A.D. 34, the governing council of the Jews confirmed their rejection of Christ by condemning Steven to death—thus ending their probationary time period. From that point on, the Christian church broadened its mission, reaching out to the Gentiles as well as Jews.

God's desire that they serve as His emissaries to the world, and particularly, instead of accepting His Son, Jesus, the Messiah, when He came, they delivered Him to the Romans for execution.

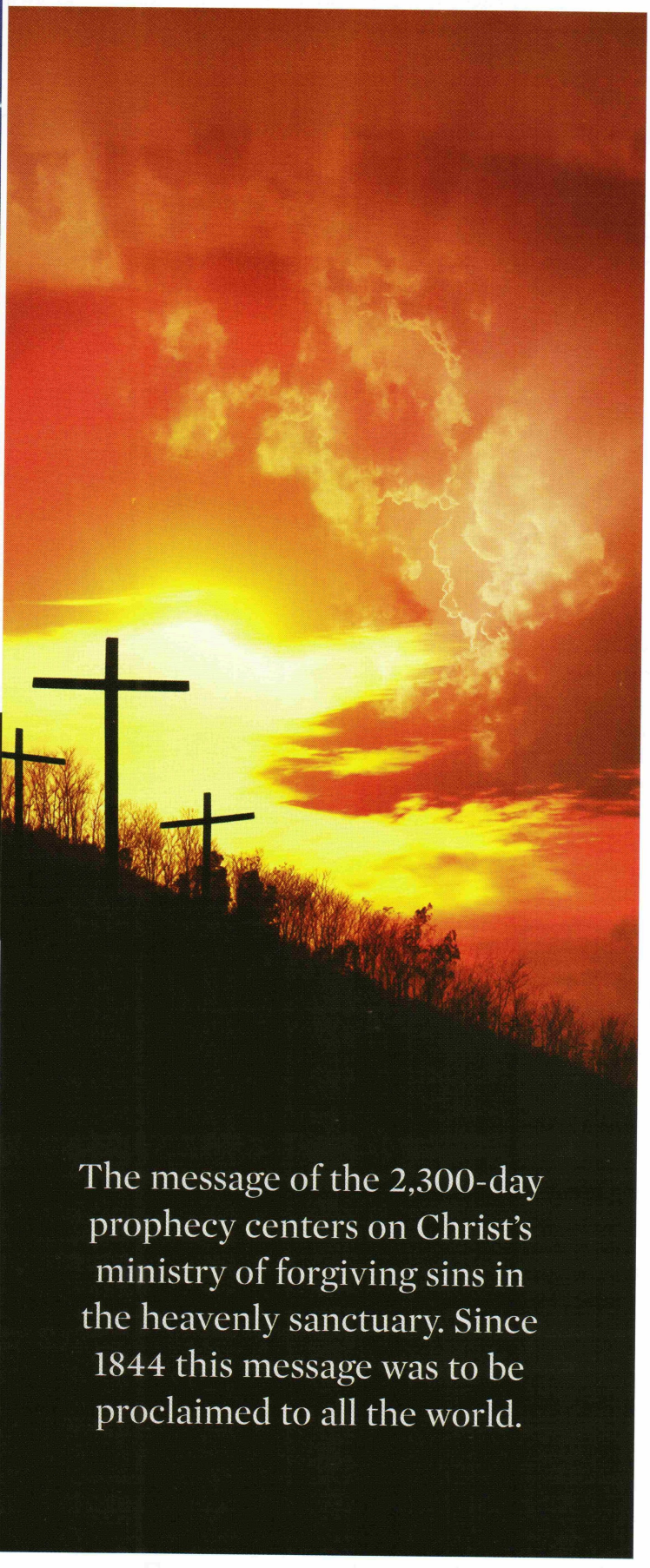
For three-and-a-half years after Jesus' death, His disciples continued to preach mainly to the Jews. But then the official council of the Jewish nation, the Sanhedrin, began a persecution of the Christians who lived in Jerusalem; they initiated this persecution by stoning to death the deacon Stephen. Consequently, the Christians scattered—and began to take the good news to the Gentiles instead. The execution of Stephen, then, which occurred about A.D. 34, marks the end of the 490 years.

Scholars believe that the stoning of Stephen by Jewish leaders confirms the accuracy of the 490-year prophecy.

Jesus had preached to the Jews for three-and-a-half years in person and for another three-and-a-half years through His disciples. He had confirmed God's special covenant with them for a "week"—or seven years (v. 27). Now the gospel was being preached to the Gentiles too, and people—Gentiles and Jews alike—would become God's "nation," not because of their ethnic background, but because of their relationship with Jesus.

And what became of the city of Jerusalem and the antichrist—the desolator? Verse 25 says that the city would be rebuilt, but "in troublesome times," which it was (see the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). Then "the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary [or temple]. ... And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate" (vs. 26, 27). Jesus spoke of this "desolating sacrilege" of Daniel's prophecy, and warned, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near" (Luke 21:20; Matthew 24:15).

Like Daniel 7 and 8, chapter 9 ends on a more satisfying note. The conclusion of Daniel 9 says that God's purpose will eventually prevail; the "decreed end" will ultimately be "poured out on the desolator," as the Revised Standard Version translates verse 27. God will rescue those who have trusted in Him, and He will build a New Jerusalem that will never be destroyed.



The message of the 2,300-day prophecy centers on Christ's ministry of forgiving sins in the heavenly sanctuary. Since 1844 this message was to be proclaimed to all the world.

Daniel 9 Confirms Daniel 8

Gabriel gave the explanation in chapter 9 to help Daniel understand the vision of chapter 8. It was the time element in the vision that Daniel didn't understand. What does chapter 9 tell us that throws light on chapter 8?

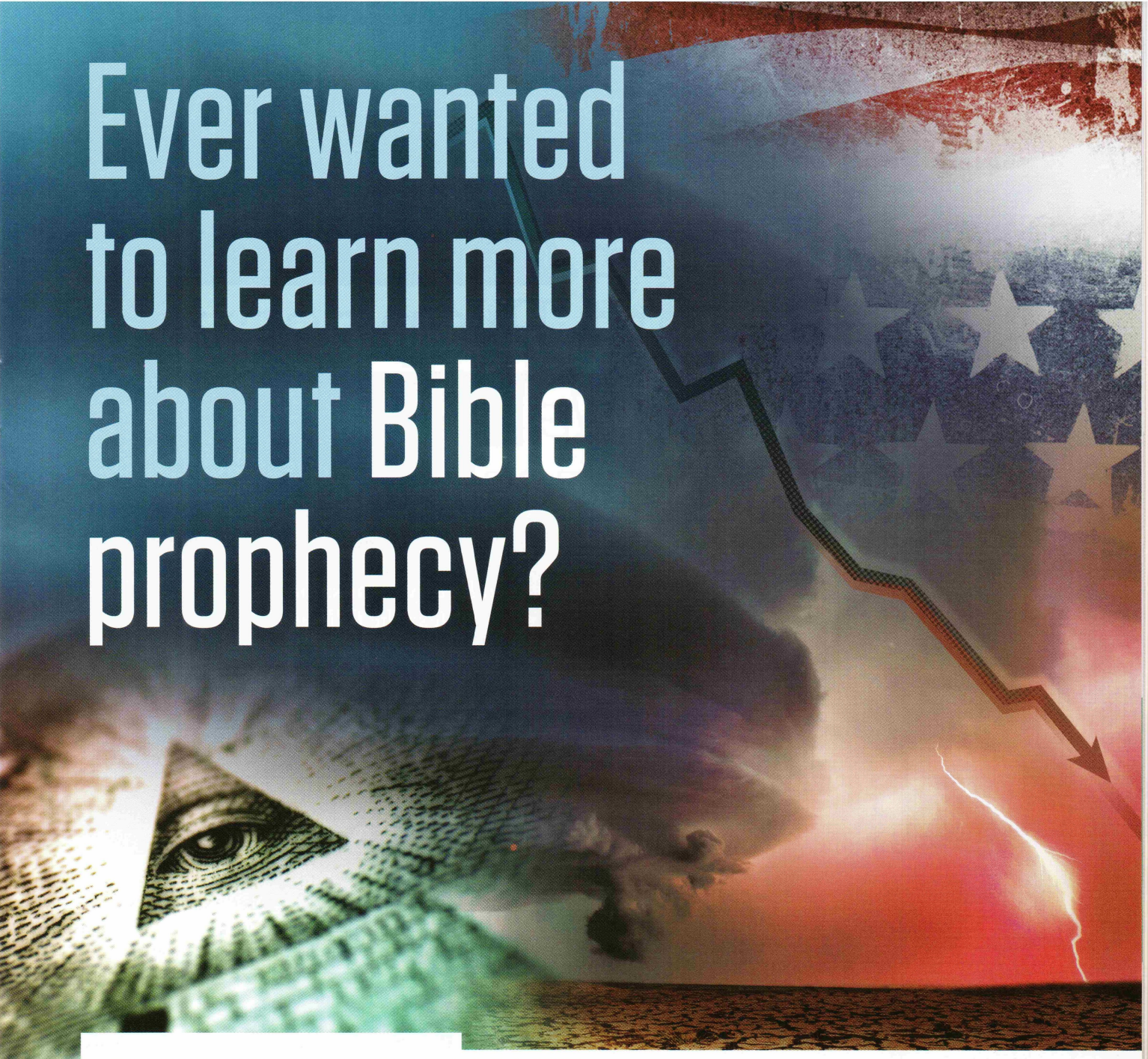
First, chapter 9 gives the starting point for the 2,300 "evening-mornings" of chapter 8:14. Daniel 9:24 says, "Seventy weeks are determined." These 70 weeks are cut off from a larger quantity of time—the 2,300 "evening-mornings." Since no starting point was given for that period, we can comfortably presume that both start at the same point—457 B.C.—otherwise, Gabriel's explanation would not help.

Second, Daniel 9 confirms that the 2,300 evening-mornings, or days, of chapter 8 are symbols that represent literal years. Both the language and the content of Daniel 9 indicate that its "seventy weeks" are years. If these 490 years are cut off from the 2,300 evening-mornings, then the latter must be years also. One could not cut 490 years out of 2,300 literal days!

Scholars agree that seventy weeks, 70 times 7, equals 490 years in prophecy.

So the 2,300 evening-mornings prophecy began in 457 B.C. and extended for 2,300 literal years. Consequently, it reached its conclusion in A.D. 1844. That's when Jesus' ministry as a high priest in the heavenly sanctuary began to be restored to prominence again. That's when He began His Day of Atonement for the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. That's when God's final judgment began.

Finally, Daniel 9:24 says that the 490-year prophecy is to "seal up vision and prophecy." It does just that for the 2,300-year prophecy of chapter 8. Jesus began His ministry as the Messiah, the anointed one, right when Daniel 9 said He would. And His death came right in the middle of the last seven of those 490 years. Thus the accuracy of the 70-week prophecy puts the seal of dependability on the larger 2,300-day prophecy.



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BIBLE PROPHECY TRUTH is a powerful, simple-to-use website resource designed to help people from every background to clearly understand the major prophecies of Scripture—including more in-depth study of Daniel and Revelation—and how it affects you today! If you ever thought the mark of the beast, Armageddon, the tribulation, and other Bible topics were next to impossible to understand for yourself, Bible Prophecy Truth gives you all the keys you need to unlock these amazing prophecy secrets. Yes ... you can know the future! Visit **bibleprophecytruth.com** today.

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Daniel 10–12: Daniel's Last Prophecy

A Time of Trouble, A Final Deliverance

> ***Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.***
> —2 THESSALONIANS 2:3

What You'll Learn

More details on the antichrist

How the Messiah gains victory after being "cut off"

Details of the Messiah's eventual rescue of God's people in the last days

DANIEL 10 THROUGH 12 FORM A UNIT. GIVEN IN LITERAL BUT SOMEWHAT CRYPTIC TERMS, IT COVERS MUCH THE SAME GROUND AS THE REST OF DANIEL'S VISIONS—ENDING WITH A PROMISE THAT WILL GIVE YOU STRENGTH AND FAITH!

Chapter 10 in Daniel serves as an introduction to this final prophecy, while chapters 11 and 12 contain the prophecy itself. Chapter 11 begins with a sketch of Middle Eastern history from Cyrus's time to that of Alexander the Great. It becomes more detailed as it deals with the powers that followed Alexander, and it closes with events that take place during the very last days of earth's history.

Differing Interpretations

Just how this prophecy covers events between the Greek Empire and the end of time, however, is a matter of some dispute among Christian interpreters.

1. Some believe that following the detailed section on Alexander's successors (chapter 11:5–13), the prophecy becomes "sketch like," only outlining the character and work of the antichrist power through the Middle Ages and on to the end.

2. Others say the prophecy continues on in detail, picturing the career of Antiochus Epiphanes—a notorious persecutor of the Jews—and covering the Maccabean revolt that ended his rule over Judea. Many of these interpreters say that Epiphanes serves as a type, or example, of the antichrist who plays such a large role in the events that conclude with Armageddon.

We don't have room to offer an in-depth analysis of every view, so let's touch on the highlights of this chapter and then leave you to study further if you like.





In the midst of Daniel's sometimes frightening and mysterious prophecies, the promise of the Messiah's return brings hope and peace to those who believe.

A Prince and the Kings

Chapter 10 begins with a two-verse description of "a certain man clothed in linen" (vs. 5, 6). Compare this description and the reaction of Daniel and his companions (v. 7) to the description of Jesus in Revelation 1:13–15 and in Paul's conversion experience (Acts 9:3–7). Obviously, in his vision of "Michael," the "prince" of the Jews, Daniel encountered Jesus Himself. Jesus appears again in the vision as "Michael," the prince of the Jews (Daniel 10:13, 21, 12:1; see also 9:25, 26). Chapter 10 goes on to reveal that history involves more than human striving. Behind the scenes, spiritual powers are at work to direct events on earth for good or evil (10:13, 20).

Michael also appears in the Bible as an archangel, but He is no more an angel than is Jesus simply a man.

Daniel 11:2–4 says that after the "three more kings" who were to follow Cyrus on the throne of Persia, there would be a fourth king—richer and stronger than them all—who would fight with Greece. This is a reference to Xerxes. Verse 3 speaks of "a mighty king," a reference to Alexander the Great, and verse 4 speaks of the fourfold division of his kingdom that earlier visions of Daniel had also predicted.

Daniel saw the vision of chapter 11 during Cyrus's reign in 539–530 B.C.

Verses 5 and 6 begin the detailed section of the prophecy. In Old Testament times, God's people were the Jews, who lived in Palestine. "The king of the South," then, was Egypt—the major power south of Palestine. And "the king of the North" was, variously, Babylon, Syria, and Rome—powers that approached the land of the Jews from the north and that were equally enemies of God and His people.

In New Testament times, God's new people, the Christian church, were no longer geographically centered—so we should expect the kings of the North and the South to be the *religious* equivalents of the old enemies. In other words, we shouldn't try to define the enemies of the church in terms of geography.

Machiavellian Schemes

Daniel 11:5 then refers to Ptolemy I of Egypt and Seleucus I of Syria. And verse 6 tells of the doomed attempt to establish peace between these two kingdoms by the marriage of Ptolemy II's daughter, Berenice, to Antiochus II of Syria—who was already married. When Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II took back his first wife, who then engineered the death of Berenice, her child, and all her attendants.

When Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II took back his first wife, who then engineered the death of Berenice, her child, and all her attendants.

More detailed prophecy of this nature follows through much of Daniel 11. But note in this portion of the prophecy references to "a vile person" (v. 21), "the prince of the covenant" (v. 22), "damage" done to "the holy covenant" (vs. 28, 30), and the "abomination of desolation" (v. 31)—all terms signifying the antichrist power that opposes God's people in the last days.

As the vision progresses, the portrait of the antichrist power becomes increasingly clear. Verse 36 says, "Then the king ... shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods." This line parallels what chapters 7 and 8 said about the little horn power. And as to the first line, compare it to what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4, about the antichrist yet to come:

> "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

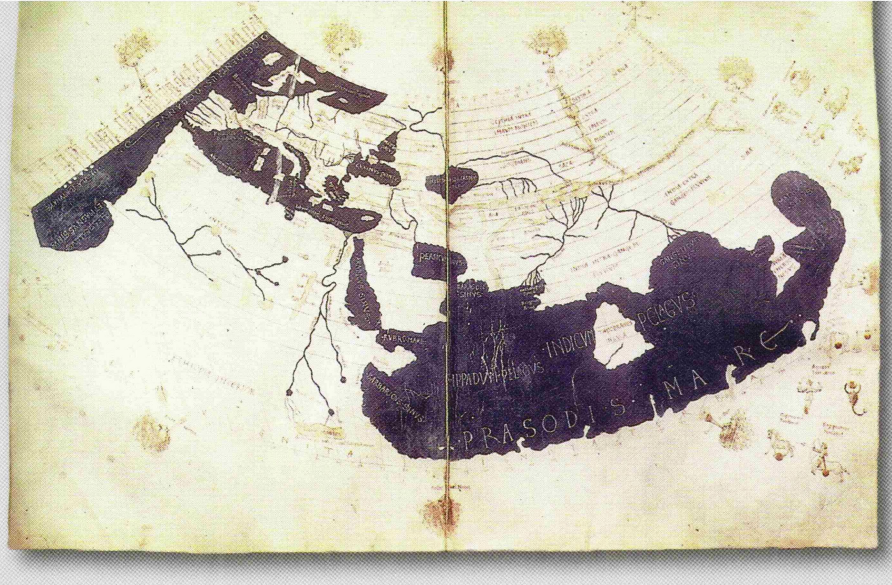
As Daniel 11 concludes, it tells of the antichrist's attack on God's people, symbolized by his military foray against them: "He shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain" (vs. 44, 45). The antichrist power would plant his forces between the Mediterranean and the "mountain" in Jerusalem on which the temple was built—in Israel, in other words. But remember, in the New Testament era, an attack on "Israel" represents an attack on the church, God's worldwide people.

But there is hope! As did all Daniel's previous visions, this one also ends with the destruction of this power that fights against God and His people: "He shall come to his end, and no one will help him" (11:45). How? "Michael shall stand up" (12:1) to take action. And though "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation," "at that time your [Daniel's] people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book."

Daniel 12 contains some "appendices" (which aren't dealt with here), but the main part of this prophecy closes with promises of a resurrection to come and with an assurance that the saints will enjoy God's kingdom forever (vs. 2, 3). D

What does this mean for you today?

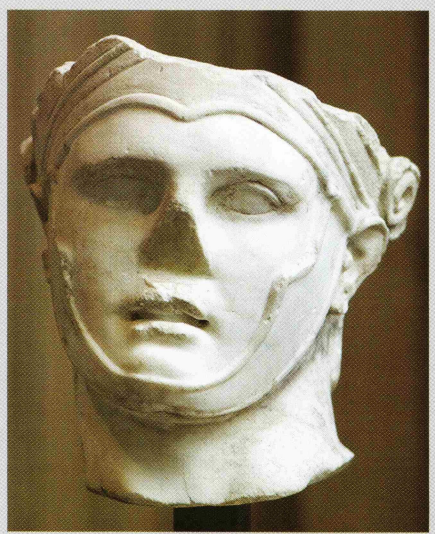
Daniel's visions picture a continuous struggle on the earth. Nations rise against nations, and tyrants direct people's attention and worship away from God to themselves. But through it all, behind the scenes, God is also constantly at work. When Jesus pictured times of trouble like these, He said: "He who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). That sums up Daniel's message too. We prepare to endure the troubles of the end time by learning to trust God now.



A 15th-century manuscript copy of the Ptolemy world map, reconstituted from Ptolemy's Geographia (circa 150), indicating the countries of Serica and Sinae (China) at the extreme east, beyond the island of Taprobane (Sri Lanka) and the Aurea Chersonesus (Malay Peninsula).



This clay cylinder is inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform and is an account by Cyrus, king of Persia (559–530 B.C.), of his conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C. and capture of Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king. British Museum.



Damaged Roman copy of a bust of Seleucus I, Louvre.

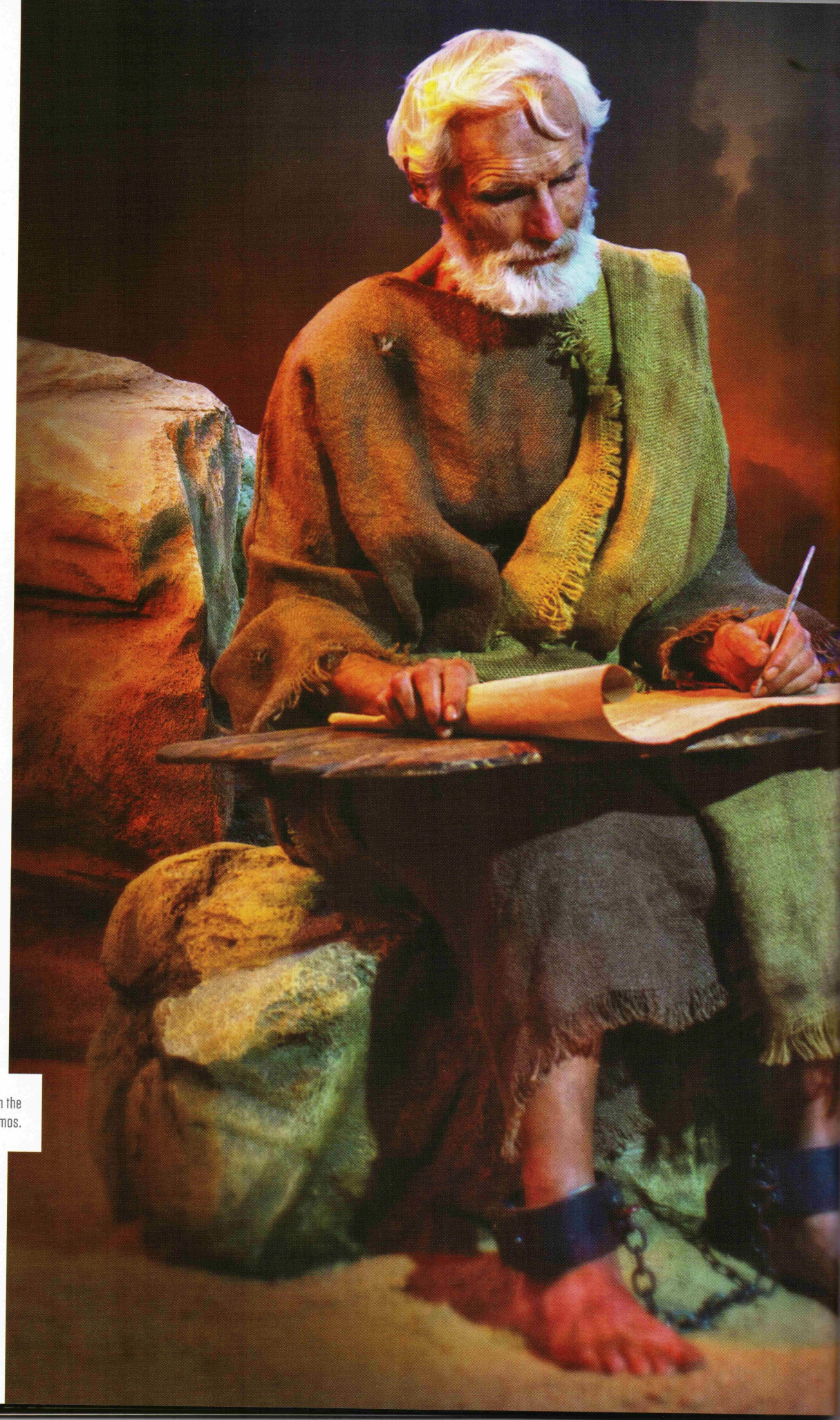
Parallels in Daniel's Visions

Chapter 2	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapters 11, 12
BABYLON Gold head (verses 37, 38)	**BABYLON** Lion (verse 4)		
PERSIA Silver chest (verse 39)	**PERSIA** Bear with one shoulder higher (verse 5)	**PERSIA** Ram with one horn higher (verses 3, 20)	**PERSIA** King (11:2)
GREECE Brass thighs (verse 39)	**GREECE** Leopard with four heads (verses 5, 8, 21)	**GREECE** He-goat with large horn, horn broken, four horns (verses 5, 8, 21)	**GREECE** Mighty king, kingdom broken into four parts (11:3, 4)
ROME Empire—legs of iron (verse 40) Divided—feet of iron and clay (verses 41–43)	**ROME** Empire—beast with iron teeth (verses 7, 23); Divided (verse 24); Little horn opposes God and His people (verses 21, 24, 25)	**ROME** Empire (verse 9) Little horn opposes God and His people (verses 9–12, 23–25)	**ROME** Opposes God and His people (11:31)
KINGDOM OF GOD Earthly power broken without hands (verse 45) Stone becomes a mountain (verses 44, 45)	**KINGDOM OF GOD** Dominion to the saints (verses 44, 45)	**KINGDOM OF GOD** Earthly power broken without hands (verse 25)	**KINGDOM OF GOD** God's people delivered (Chapter 12:1–3)





The Book *of* Revelation



John the Revelator on the island of Patmos.

Introduction to the Book of Revelation

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

> ***Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.***
>
> —JOHN 13:19

What You'll Learn

Who wrote this mysterious prophetic book

Why Revelation is part of the Bible

How the book of Revelation applies to you today

THE BOOK OF REVELATION FEATURES STRANGE AND VIOLENT IMAGERY: A DRAGON, A BEAST, A HARLOT, LOCUSTS THAT STING LIKE SCORPIONS, BLOOD, EARTHQUAKES, HAILSTORMS, AND LAKES OF FIRE. AT TIMES, IT CAN SEEM DISCOURAGING AND EVEN A LITTLE REPULSIVE. BUT ITS DEPICTION OF A NEW EARTH—IN WHICH SORROW AND PAIN AND DEATH DO NOT EXIST—OFFERS HOPE FOR EVERY READER SEEKING UNDERSTANDING.

Who Was John the Revelator?

During the latter part of his reign, the Roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 81–96) tried to establish his claim to deity by forcing his subjects to worship him. Refusal brought punishment, including exile and execution.

Domitian's persecutions brought Christianity face to face with the fiercest external threat it had known. Its resources were limited, and of the original leadership—the 12 apostles—only one, John, remained. Worse, he had been exiled to the rocky, barren Island of Patmos, awaiting the fate of other believers. More than ever, the church needed encouragement.

Revelation was written around A.D. 90.

God gave John visions that fill this book to meet that need. Revelation places the troubles Christians face in a bigger picture of the struggle between good and evil, and particularly, of the outcome of that struggle. In his introduction to the book, John called it "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place" (chapter 1:1). In other words, the encouragement Revelation supplies comes in its picture of the future.

Although John wrote down the visions in this book, its title is actually "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

Still, much of that picture is pretty dark. Revelation's first half portrays the Christian church's spiritual decline, which the apostle Paul also wrote about in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. It's in the second half of Revelation that the real encouragement comes—a turning of the tables. God intervenes, bringing to justice the apostate Christian church and the political and economic powers with which it illicitly allied itself.

Revelation ends on a very bright note. It says that when Christ returns, He will bring a "reward" for those who have patiently endured the oppression, who have steadfastly kept "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (see 22:12; 14:12). That reward? God's new creation, where He will live with the saved in a perfect world unmarred by evil.

Revelation's central message calls its readers to "hang in there." Those who remain faithful to God will face tough times. But in the end, they'll be glad they stuck it out.

Revelation's Roots

It doesn't take long for most readers to notice that Revelation resembles the Old Testament book of Daniel. Like Daniel, John's visions are full of strange creatures and other unusual imagery, which are explicitly said to be symbols representing a physical reality (e.g., 17:15, 18). And like Daniel's prophecy, Revelation is "apocalyptic" prophecy, meaning it's particularly concerned with the cosmic struggle between Satan and God. It means that this book portrays the world from the viewpoint of the final judgment, when all are either on God's side or against Him.

> The book of Revelation is deeply connected to the book of Daniel.

Revelation's imagery exhibits a strong relationship to the Old Testament. The dragon and beasts of chapter 12, for instance, are composites of the beasts of Daniel 7. Revelation also draws from Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Minor Prophets, and particularly Ezekiel—as well as from the rest of the Old Testament. Even images from the Creation story appear in it. And so do themes based on major events in the history of Israel, such as the Exodus and the ravages of Babylon, the actual and symbolic oppressor of God's people.

Revelation's use of these themes and imagery tells us that, like the rest of the New Testament, the author looks for the fulfillment of the Old Testament's end-time prophecies in the New Testament's equivalent of the nation of Israel—the Christian church. Revelation calls the church Christ's "kingdom" (1:6 NIV; cf. Exodus 19:6). As biblical scholar Hans LaRondelle notes, "This forbids any effort to apply the [Old Testament] sense of the Hebrew names and geographic places ... according to their old-covenant ethnic and local restrictions" ("Armageddon: Sixth and Seventh Plagues," *Symposium II*, 383).

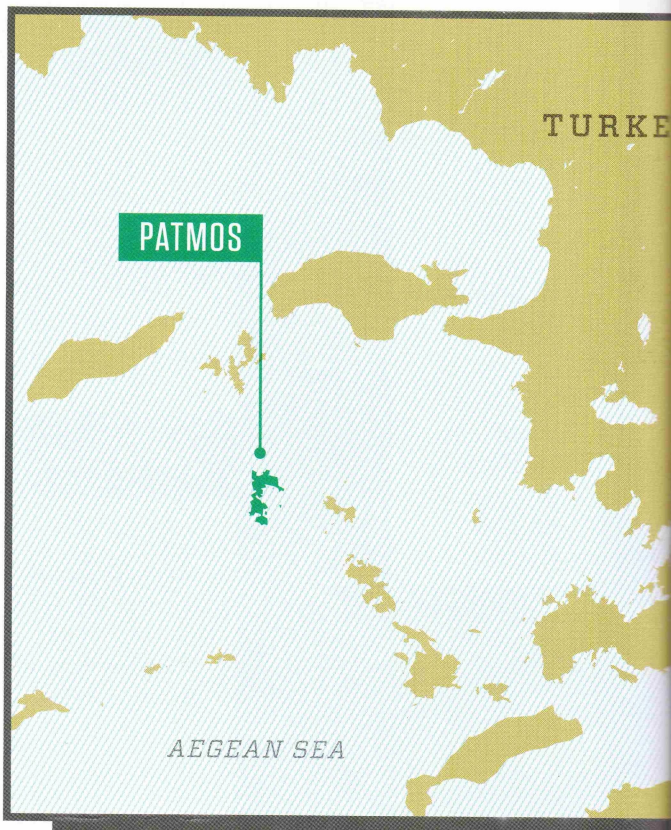
In other words, Revelation's focus is fixed upon Christ and His New Testament people. Yes, John used the geography of Palestine and the names of ancient Israel's enemies—but in Revelation, these are symbols representing what the church and its modern-day persecutors will experience.

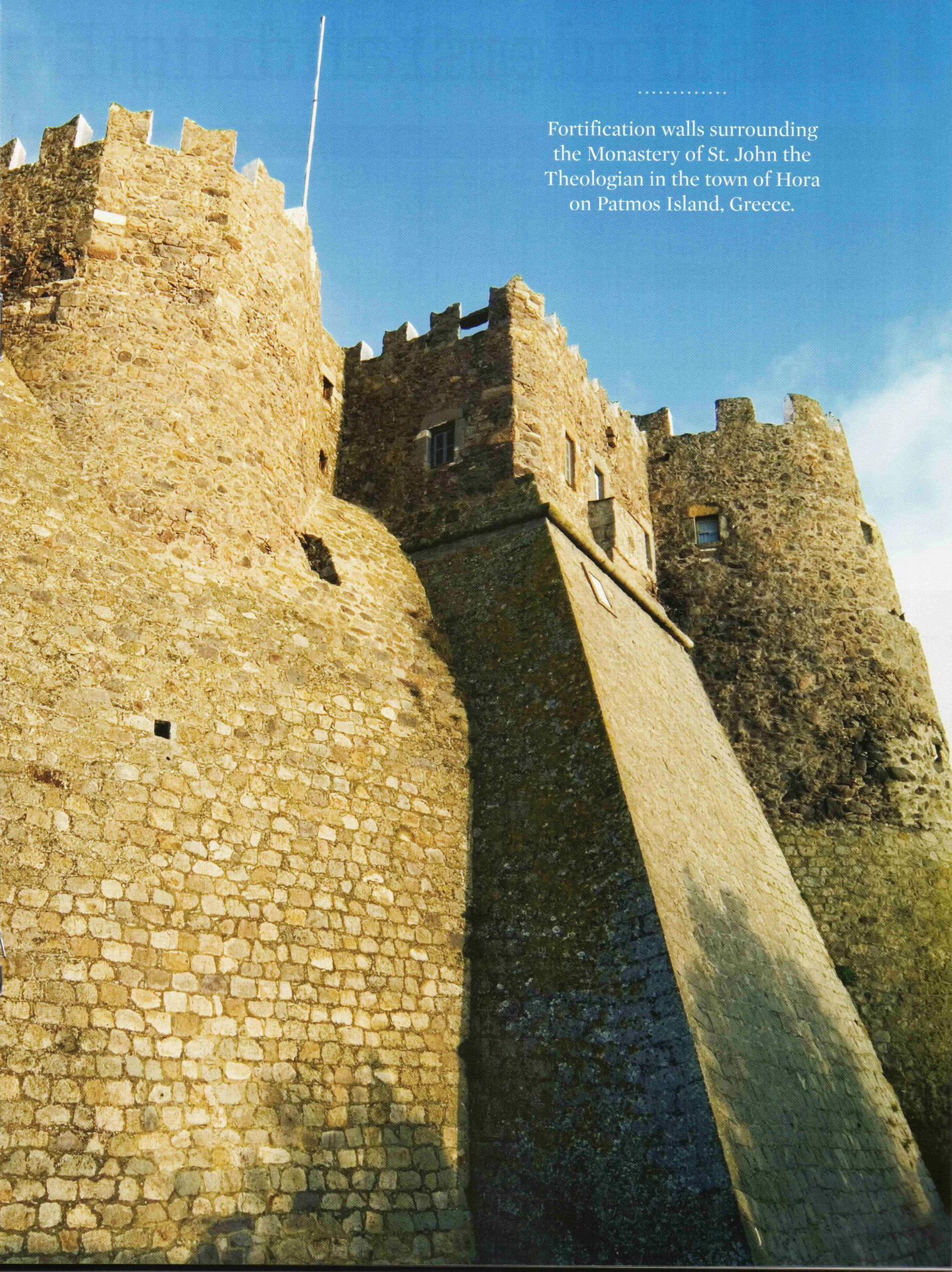
Don't Be Dogmatic

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus prophesied that one of the disciples would betray Him. Then He said, "Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe" (John 13:19). That statement says something important about prophecy. God doesn't send prophets to satisfy our curiosity about the future. He sends them to strengthen our faith—"that when it does come to pass, you may believe."

This principle speaks to how we interpret Revelation. We can identify with some certainty how prophecy has been fulfilled in history, recognizing that it strengthens our faith in Scripture and in God's ability to accomplish His will. But when we come to the parts still to be fulfilled, humility becomes particularly important. We might be able to sense the general approach the fulfillment will likely take, but there's no room or need for dogmatism as to the specifics.

John wrote his prophecies for the believers of his day. But he meant them for us, too, on whom the end of the world is come. John pronounced a blessing on "he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (1:3). We can share in that blessing. R





Fortification walls surrounding the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in the town of Hora on Patmos Island, Greece.

Section 8

Understanding Re

Prologue	7 Churches	7 Seals	7 Trumpets	Great Controversy
(1:18) Introduction	(1:10 to 3:22) Christ counsels His church, at war, scattered in many cities.	(4:1 to 8:1) Christ shields His afflicted people.	(8:2 to 11:18) Severe judgments warn the world.	(11:19 to 14:20) Trials of the true Mother and her children.
• Testimony of Jesus. 1:2 • Blessed is he who reads. 1:3 • Behold, He is coming. 1:7 • I am the Alpha and the Omega. 1:8	• Christ walks among seven lamps. 2:1 • Tree of life. 2:7 • Open door. 3:8 • Christ sits on His Father's throne. 3:21 • New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. 3:12 • I am coming soon. 3:11	• Heaven opened. 4:1 • Rider on white horse followed by riders on variously colored horses. 6:2-8 • Souls of martyrs, under altar, ask for judgment. 6:9, 10 • White robes. 3:21 • Kings, generals, etc., ask to be killed. 6:15, 16	1. Earth, 8:7 2. Sea. 8:8, 9 3. Rivers and fountains. 8:10, 11 4. Sun, moon, and stars. 8:12 5. Darkness, bottomless pit, locusts. 9:1-11 6. River Euphrates. 9:13-21 7. Loud voices: The kingdom is Christ's! 11:15-18	• True mother, dressed in white. 12:1, 2 • Her children keep the commandments. 12:17 • Woman in the wilderness. 12:14 • Beast with 7 heads, 10 horns. 12:3; 13:1-4 • Fallen is Babylon! 13:8 • Testimony of Jesus. 12:17

Historical Half The Great Controversy in Progress

What You'll Learn

The underlying structure of the book of Revelation

Deeper connections between Revelation and the Old Testament

The two halves of Revelation

LET'S ADMIT IT: REVELATION IS A DIFFICULT BOOK TO UNDERSTAND! IT'S EVEN HARD TO KNOW ITS BASIC MEANING WITH JUST A SIMPLE READING, AS WE CAN WITH THE GOSPELS. SOMETIMES EVEN CAREFUL STUDY DOESN'T ALWAYS PRODUCE SATISFACTORY RESULTS. RECOGNIZING ITS USE OF OLD TESTAMENT IMAGERY DOES A LOT TO ILLUMINATE ITS MEANING. BUT DETERMINING THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK—ITS STRUCTURE—DOES EVEN MORE TO HELP US UNDERSTAND IT ...

Revelation's structure is based on that of Hebrew poetry. In this age, and particularly in the West, we do most of our writing in prose. We tend to think of poetry as "art" and, therefore, marginal to the more important matters of life. But that was not the case in Bible times. One-third of the Old Testament was written as poetry, as a look at one of the modern versions of the Bible will show. The prophets recorded much of their messages, which were so important to the author of Revelation, as poetry.

Like our poetry today, that of ancient Israel expressed emotions and used figurative language. Occasionally, their poetry, like ours, made use of similar sounding words. But most often, Hebrew writers constructed their poetry on other kinds of parallelism—especially parallelism of meaning or a thought. This is "synonymous parallelism," in which the second or succeeding lines repeat the thought of the first line in different words; for example:

"Israel	does not	know,
"My people	do not	consider"
(Isaiah 1:3).*		

Or it might be "antithetical parallelism," in which the succeeding line stands in contrast to the first line; for example:

"A soft answer	turns away	wrath
But a harsh word	stirs up	anger"
(Proverbs 15:1.)		

A "chiasm" is a particular form of parallelism. In a typical chiastic structure, one thought (**A**) is presented; a second thought (**B**) is added;

* Illustrations of biblical parallelism and chiasmus come from Lee J. Gugliotta, *Handbook for Bible Study* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1995), 36, 38

velation's Organization

7 Last Plagues	Fall of Babylon	Millennium	New Jerusalem	Epilogue
(15:1 to 16:21) Very severe judgments punish the world.	(17:1 to 19:10) Downfall of the false Mother.	(19:11 to 21:8) Christ enthrones His resurrected people.	(21:9 to 22:7) Christ rewards His church, at peace, gathered into one city.	(22:8–17) Conclusion
1. Earth. 16:2 2. Sea. 16:3 3. Rivers and fountains. 16:4 4. Sun, moon, and stars. 16:8, 9 5. Darkness on the throne of the beast. 16:10, 11 6. River Euphrates. 16:12–16 7. A loud voice: It is done! 16:17–21	• False mother, dressed in purple. 2:1 • Her children are harlots. 2:7 • Woman in wilderness. 17:3 • Beast with 7 heads, 10 horns. 17:3 • Fallen is Babylon! 18:2 • Testimony of Jesus. 19:10	• Heaven opened. 19:11 • Rider on white horse followed by riders on white horses. 19:11–16 • Souls of martyrs, resurrected, are enthroned as judges. 20:4–6 • White robes. 19:14 • Kings, captains, etc., are killed. 19:17–21	• Christ is the eternal Lamp. 21:23 • Tree of life. 22:2 • Gates never closed. 21:25 • Throne of God and of the Lamb. 22:1, 3 • New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. 21:10 • I am coming soon. 22:7	• I, Jesus, sent this testimony. 22:16 • Blessed is he who keeps. 22:7 • Behold. I am coming soon. 22:12, 20 • I am the Alpha and the Omega. 22:13

Eschatological Half The Great Controversy Consummated

The word "chiasm" comes from chi, the name of the Greek letter X, which has the shape one might imagine a chiastic poem to have.

then follows a third thought (**B'**), which stands in some kind of parallelism—synonymous or antithetic—to (**B**); and finally, a fourth thought (**A'**) parallels in some way to (**A**), completing the structure. The following example shows a three-element chiasm:

> **A** *"Ephraim*
> ***B*** *shall not envy*
> ***C*** *Judah, and*
> ***C'*** *Judah*
> ***B'*** *shall not harass*
> ***A'*** *Ephraim" (Isaiah 11:13).*

Poetry pervades the Old Testament, and chiasms abound throughout. Consequently, it's not difficult to believe that the writer of a New Testament book so full of references to the Old Testament would also use one of its prominent literary forms to structure his own book. But the fact that this structure fits Revelation—that it works—makes this suggestion even more convincing.

The four major prophecies of Daniel parallel one another, each beginning in the prophet's time and portraying the political and religious developments that lead to the end of the world and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

Similarly, the first half of Revelation, its historical section, contains four major prophetic visions that begin in the prophet's time and reach to the end of the world—Christ's second coming, when God intervenes to end evil and establish His kingdom. The second half of Revelation also consists of four parts. These focus strictly on end-time ("eschatological") events, detailing the fate of those who have persisted in their rebellion against God and the "reward" of those who have remained faithful to God.

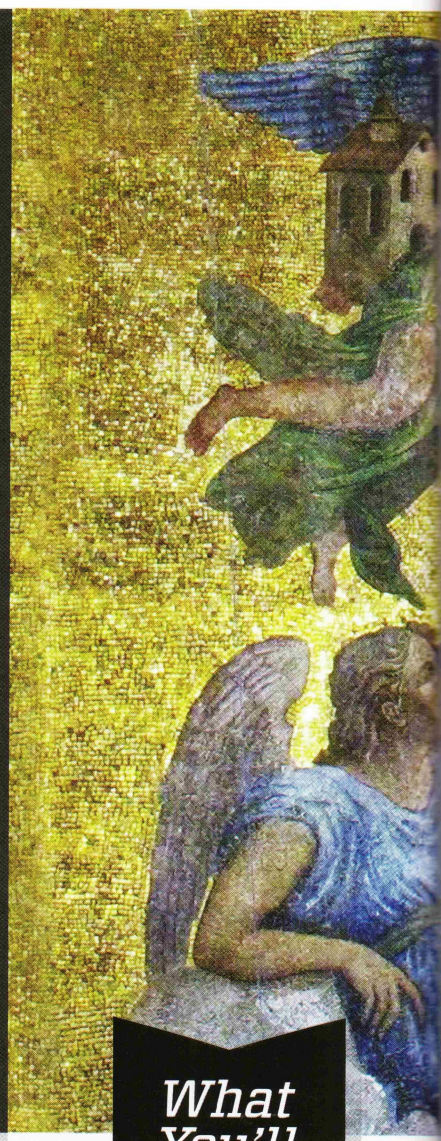
Like Daniel and 2 Thessalonians 2, Revelation presents the spiritual decline of the church. The visions of the seven churches and seven seals tell the story of that decline. The vision of the seven trumpets are the warnings God sends to call people from that downward track to one that offers a better end. The vision of the dragon, sea beast, and land beast/false prophet reveals the roots of that decline and what those who persist in it will do to the faithful. Chapter 14—the focus of Revelation, the center of the chiasm—highlights the central issue in the cosmic battle of good and evil, the grounds of the decline. And the rest of Revelation, its eschatological half, reveals how God will deal with the unfaithful and then with the faithful. R

Bible scholars have counted about 300 references to the Old Testament in the book of Revelation.

Don't be troubled by the *fact that the chapter divisions in Revelation don't fit the outline exactly. Those chapter divisions are not John's; they were added more than a thousand years after he completed his writing.*

The Seven Churches

Christianity's History



> *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ... He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.*
> —Revelation 2:10, 11

EPHESIANS 4 SAYS THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS LIKE A BODY OF WHICH JESUS IS THE HEAD. ITS MEMBERS ARE HIS HANDS AND FEET, COMMISSIONED TO GO WHERE HE SENDS AND DO HIS WORK. ONE WOULD EXPECT, THEN, THAT JESUS WOULD BE QUITE CONCERNED ABOUT THE WELFARE OF HIS BODY, THE CHURCH. CHAPTERS 2 AND 3 OF REVELATION CONTAIN LETTERS JESUS DICTATED TO SEVEN CHURCHES IN THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF ASIA (WHAT IS NOW TURKEY)—THE CHURCHES IN EPHESUS, SMYRNA, PERGAMOS, THYATIRA, SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA, AND LAODICEA.

Follow Along: Revelation Chapters 1–5

If John, recording these letters from Jesus, were to have sent a letter carrier from Patmos, his island of exile, to those churches, the messenger would have started with Ephesus, a port on the mainland closest to Patmos. Then he would have taken a road that traveled a circular route through Smyrna, Pergamos, and the other cities in the order in which Revelation names them, ending with Laodicea.

What You'll Learn

The complete history of the Christian church

The era of the Christian church in which Christ will return

The church to which Christians belong today



Mosaic in St Mark's Basilica depicting the angels standing guard over the seven churches of Asia.

No doubt the contents of Revelation were read in those churches, so the messages the book contains obviously made sense to those members. And it seems unlikely that Jesus, who called Himself "the Truth," would have confused the members of those churches with messages that didn't actually fit their situations.

There were also, however, churches in other nearby cities in Asia that could easily have been included in this route but were not. Why were they left out? For one, Revelation is full of sevens: seven trumpets, seven seals, seven plagues, and so forth. The repeated combining of the number seven with symbols implies that this number is also to be understood as symbolic. In Scripture, seven represents completeness. These seven churches represent a "complete" picture of Jesus' church and His people on earth.

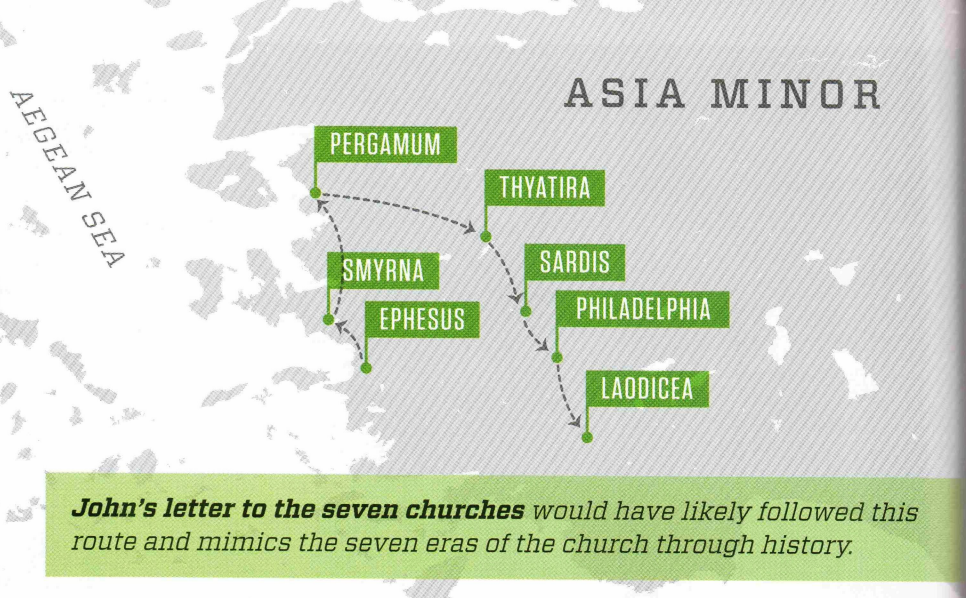
In other words, not only did Jesus' messages to the seven churches speak to those churches, but they also fit the spiritual needs of every individual believer and congregation throughout the Christian era. All of these messages have value for all churches today. Some parts might apply more than other parts, but each is worth our study.

And there's more. Revelation builds on the visions of Daniel, which portrayed history from that prophet's time to the end. Revelation does the same; in its "complete" picture of the Christian church, it portrays the church from John's time to the end. In fact, in introducing the messages to the seven churches, Jesus specifically told John to "write ... the things which will take place after this" (1:19). Just as John's messenger would have gone progressively from church to church delivering the messages, so the prophecy moves sequentially from era to era, starting with John's day and progressing to the end.

Revelation is full of sevens: seven trumpets, seven seals, seven plagues, etc. In Scripture, the number seven is the prince of numbers and represents completeness.

Before turning to the individual messages, note one more point: Each of these messages was built on the same general pattern. Jesus began each one by

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR



***John's letter to the seven churches** would have likely followed this route and mimics the seven eras of the church through history.*

identifying Himself in a way particularly appropriate to the needs of the church or era it represents. As a rule, the body of each message contains commendations of the church's spiritual strengths, insights on its weaknesses, counsel as to how it can correct the problems, and warnings about what will happen if the faults are not corrected. And each message concludes with promises to those who overcome the problems cited.

Ephesus — A.D. 31-100

Jesus praised the Ephesus church for its perseverance and good works and for having tested and repudiated false teachers that beset the church toward the end of the first century A.D. These false teachers, particularly the "Nicolaitans" (verse 6), appear to have taught that deeds of the flesh do not affect the purity of the soul and consequently have no bearing on salvation.

While John's vision of the seven churches specifies eras of the Christian church through history, it is not a time prophecy. The dates suggested here are only approximate, helping to establish rough correlations of prophetic periods with historical eras.

But some 40 years had passed since Paul had first brought the gospel to Ephesus. A whole new generation now comprised the church and its leadership. And while they were carefully maintaining correct doctrine, they had lost their "first love" (v. 4).

What the Ephesian church was experiencing must have been occurring in many other first-century churches as well. Losing the "first love" experience has always been a temptation for second and third-generation believers. No doubt that's why Jesus chose Ephesus to represent the situation of the whole Christian church through the apostolic era.

Smyrna — A.D. 100-313

The message to the church in Smyrna differs from most of the others in that it contains no reproof. Jesus had nothing but encouragement for this church, which faced persecution (v. 10).

> Jesus' encouragement came first in His introduction of Himself as one who had experienced such troubles and had come out of them (v. 8). And it reappeared in the counsel and promise with which He closed the message: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ... He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death [the one from which there is no resurrection]" (vs. 10, 11).

Early in the second century A.D., the emperor Trajan established what stood as the official Roman policy toward Christianity until Constantine issued an edict of toleration in A.D. 313. Roman officials were not to hunt down Christians, but if people were brought before them for other offenses and were discovered to be Christians, they were to be executed unless they recanted. Throughout this period, Christians lived constantly with the possibility of discovery and death. And while Trajan had ruled that officials were not to hunt down Christians, some later emperors, particularly Diocletian and Galerius, carried on aggressive campaigns against the church.

Pergamos — A.D. 313-538

Jesus commended the church of the Pergamos era for holding "fast to My name" and for not denying "My faith" even in the midst of persecution (v. 13). During the period represented by Pergamos, various church councils established the orthodox Christian understanding of Jesus' divinity and humanity. Ancient church historian Theodoret said of the various bishops arriving for the first of these councils that some came without eyes, some without arms, which had been pulled from their sockets, and others with their bodies maimed in other horrible ways. These were people who had suffered for remaining faithful to their profession of Christ.

But Jesus rebuked the church at Pergamos for tolerating the insidious heresy of the Nicolaitans, which the Ephesians had rejected (v. 15). And another dangerous evil, "the doctrine of Balaam" (v. 14), was beginning to influence this church as well. To obtain royal favor and wealth, the ancient prophet Balaam had sold out the truth God wanted him to proclaim and led God's people into idolatry and immorality (see Numbers 22–25).

Constantine's edict of tolerance, which ended the persecution the Christian church had been enduring, ironically brought new dangers: both the influence of a "friendly" state and compromise with the paganism that had previously been the church's enemy. The era of the church of Pergamos saw the beginning of the great "falling away," or apostasy, that Paul had prophesied would happen before Jesus' second advent (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Thyatira — A.D. 538-1565

During this period, the Christian church was responsible for many of the good things happening in society. It ran the hospitals, orphanages, schools, and missions. And among its members were faithful Christians—such as St. Francis of Assisi, the Waldenses, and John Wycliffe—who revealed God's love and upheld His Word.

But Jesus rebuked Christianity at large for allowing "that woman Jezebel ... to ... beguile My servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (v. 20). Scripture calls the time of Jezebel's influence one of the lowest points in Israel's history (see 1 Kings 16:30, 33; 21:25, 26). As with Balaam, the matter was one of leaders tempting God's people into unfaithfulness and spiritual adultery.



Mosaic found in Laodiceia. Laodiceia was situated at a distance of 6 mi from Hierapolis (Pamukkale) and of 4 mi from the village Eskihisar. It was founded in 261–265 B.C. by Antiochos II.

In His message to the church of Thyatira, Jesus said, "I gave her [Jezebel] time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent" (Revelation 2:21). Of the last portion of this period, Cambridge historian Owen Chadwick wrote, "Everyone that mattered in the Western Church was crying out for reformation"—cries that went unheeded by the official church.

The "great tribulation" and death of which Jesus warned in this message (vs. 22, 23) might have seen their fulfillment in such tragedies as the bubonic plague, which killed 40 percent of the population of Europe, the Hundred Years' War, the revolts of the agrarian and urban poor, and the Thirty Years' War, which is estimated to have caused 10 million deaths out of a population of 18 million in Germany alone!

Sardis — A.D. 1565-1750

Jesus had little good to say about this church, which had "a name that you are alive, but you are dead" (chapter 3:1). Christianity experienced a great revival in the early years of the 16th century through a renewed understanding of justification by faith. But almost immediately the revival descended into a period of violent doctrinal controversy. To many it seemed more important to express justification by faith in precise terminology than to experience it in their lives. The various religious movements soon adopted rigid creeds that locked people into formal "head" religion that did little for their hearts.

Jesus did note, however, that there were "a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (v. 4). Perhaps He had in mind people like John Bunyan, who wrote that gospel-proclaiming book *Pilgrim's Progress*; the Pietists Spener and von Zinzendorf; and the Moravians, who stimulated a renewed interest in missionary outreach.

Philadelphia — A.D. 1750-1844

As with Smyrna, Jesus had only positive things to say about this church. During the last half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th, revivals swept across England, France, and America, sparking intense missionary outreach to other parts of the world. British Christians sent missionaries throughout the expanding British Empire.

The year 1793 saw the founding of the British Missionary Society by William Carey, and other missionary societies followed in Holland, Germany, and America. Less than a decade later, in 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded, and others arose as well.

This period also saw the birth of the Sunday school movement, the establishment of orphanages, growing pressure from Christians in Britain and America for the abolition of slavery, and the founding of church-related colleges. All these movements were characterized by the initiative and involvement of laity, interchurch cooperation, and self-sacrifice.

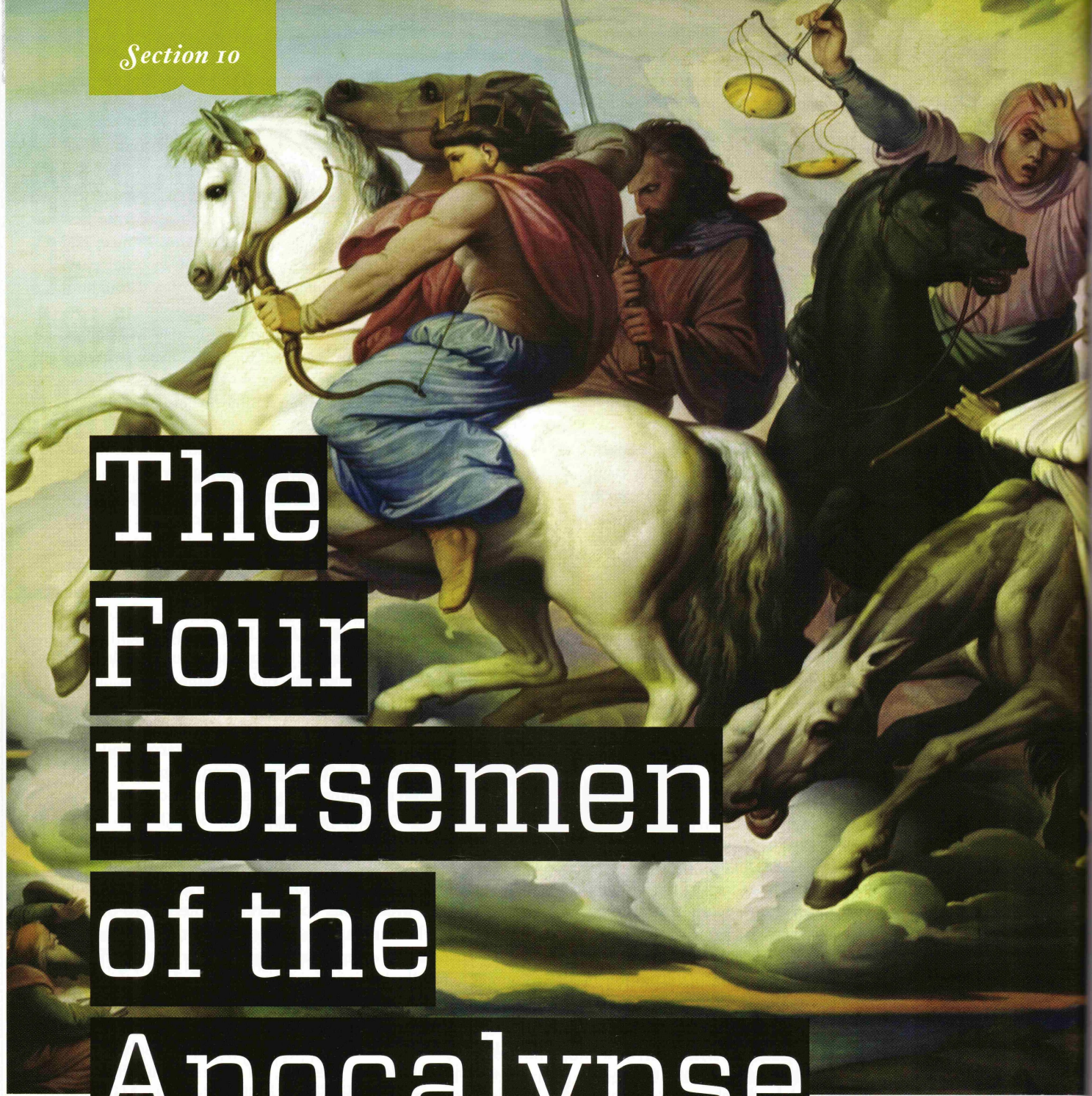
Laodicea — A.D. 1844-the End

In contrast to the message to Philadelphia, which contained only commendation, Jesus' message to the Laodicean church contains only warnings. He characterized Christianity in this period as being "lukewarm" and self-deceived—"because you say, 'I am rich' ... and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (vs. 16, 17).

Jesus' counsel (v. 18) is particularly revealing, because the Laodiceans thought they had in abundance the very things He told them they needed to obtain. Laodicea was a prosperous commercial center. Nero offered financial aid when an earthquake destroyed the city, but the citizens turned his offer down, saying they had sufficient resources to handle the situation. One of the reasons for this prosperity was their commerce in the fine woolen garments for which their area was renowned. And a famous school of medicine just outside Laodicea kept the citizens supplied with eye salve.

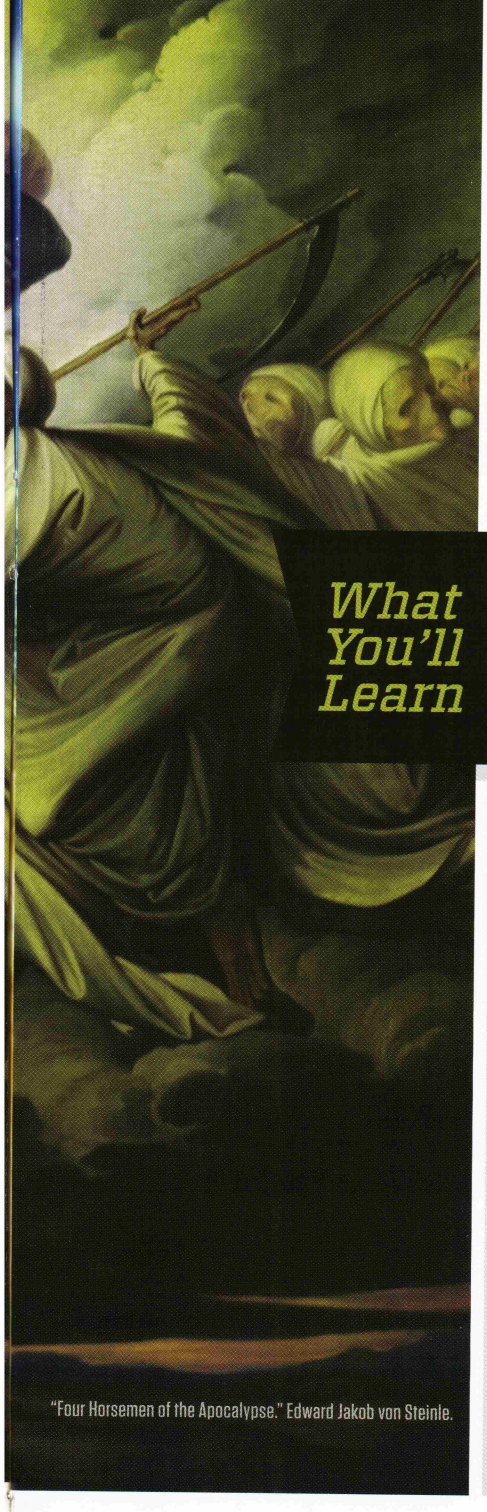
The point of Jesus' message, of course, was that the Laodiceans' complacency and self-satisfaction were dangerous because they were unfounded. They made a great profession of religion, but their practice fell far short. But Jesus' warning was motivated by good will. He said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" (v. 19). And in the next verse, He indicated that He'd taken the initiative; in fact, He'd done as much as He could: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me (v. 20)."

This message that combines warning and invitation is the last of the seven. That means it extends right up to Jesus' second coming. In other words, it's for our age; Jesus was speaking to you. Will you open that door for Him to enter your heart? R



The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

> *Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."*
>
> —Revelation 6:1



"Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." Edward Jakob von Steinle.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU? JOHN'S VISION OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES PROVIDED ONE VIEW OF COMING EVENTS. HIS VISION OF THE SCROLL SEALED WITH SEVEN SEALS LOOKS OVER THE SAME TERRITORY FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE. AND IT IS HIGHLIGHTED BY A VIEW OF THE REWARD TO BE ENJOYED BY THOSE WHOSE FAITH IN GOD ENDURES THROUGH THE GREAT TRIBULATION HE FORESAW.

Follow Along: Revelation Chapters 4–7

What You'll Learn

- Why the scroll was sealed with seven seals
- The only person worthy of breaking those seals and why
- The meaning behind the silence in heaven

Introducing the vision of the churches was a scene in which John saw Christ walking among seven candlesticks. The vision of the seven seals took John to the heavenly sanctuary, where stands God's throne. Chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation describe the scene, picturing in detail the courtiers—particularly four "living creatures" and 24 elders—and their worship.

Revelation 5 introduces the theme that will be developed through the next several chapters: "a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals" (v. 1). The context of Revelation 4 and 5 is the enthronement of Christ after His resurrection. Jesus was now in heaven and approached the Heavenly Father. Revelation 6 and 7 focus on what happens as these seals are broken; however, it doesn't tell us what this scroll is and what comprises its contents. But two Old Testament passages that underlie this symbol give us some clues.

- Ezekiel 2:8 pictures a scroll that has been written on the inside and out, which the prophet is told to eat (cf. Revelation 10). Ezekiel tells what was written on the scroll he was given: "Lamentations and mourning and woe"—contents that accord well with what happens as the seals on John's scroll are broken.

- The other Old Testament passage related to John's scroll is the last chapter of Daniel. As the angel gave Daniel his final instructions and encouragement, he told him to "shut up" and "seal" his book "until the time of the end," when "knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4; see also verse 9).

Therefore, it's likely the sealed scroll John saw in God's hand contained the prophecies that reveal the events leading up to Christ's return, prophecies that include events that will cause mourning and woe in those who oppose God. In Daniel's time, these events were still far in the future, so the book was sealed "until the time of the end." But by John's day, these were "things which must shortly take place" (Revelation 1:1), and his instructions were to write about these things (v. 19).

The New King James Version uses the word "book" in Revelation 10 and Daniel 12, but in Bible times all "books" were scrolls.



Needed: A Seal Breaker

But the scroll was sealed with seven seals. That meant each of the seals had to be broken before John could open and read the scroll and reveal its contents—the events that are to usher in God's eternal kingdom. This explains his distress when "no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll" (chapter 5:3; see also verse 2).

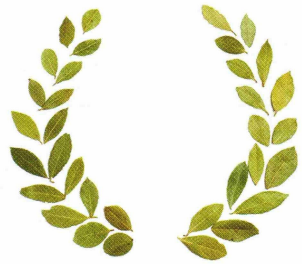
Having been made anxious by the lack of a qualified "seal breaker," we appreciate all the more the introduction of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," the "Lamb . . . having seven horns and seven eyes" (vs. 5, 6). That this figure represents Christ is emphasized by references to His death and the redemption it has obtained and to His elevation to the throne, where He receives worship along with God.

With the scene set, the action begins: The Lamb starts breaking the seals. The seals are broken sequentially, and the results of each described before the next is taken up—an indication that they portray historical progression. The fact that the cry of the martyrs in the fifth seal comes as a consequence of the actions of the horsemen of the previous seals also indicates that the seals are broken sequentially rather than simultaneously.

While the seals function sequentially, the action begun under one seal might continue well after the breaking of the next.

At the breaking of the **FIRST SEAL**, John saw a white horse whose rider "went out conquering and to conquer" (chapter 6:2).

Throughout Revelation, white is the color of Christ and His church (see 1:14; 2:17; etc.). And in Revelation's chiastic structure, the first seal's white horse with its conquering rider is paralleled by that of chapter 19, where the rider is obviously Christ. But there are also differences. The rider of chapter 19 wears a crown of royal rule and completely vanquishes His foes. The crown of the rider of Revelation 6 is the wreath of victory (a stephanos), and the events under the seals that follow this first one make it clear that the victory obtained is only preliminary. This seal is best understood as representing Christ's victory at the cross and the early spread of His invisible kingdom through the church He established.



A stephanos is a wreath awarded as a prize to the victor in a public contest, or as a token of honor, especially in recognition of some public service.

Three Troubling Horsemen

In this vision of the seals, the remaining three horsemen of the Apocalypse picture troubled times. When the **SECOND SEAL** was opened, John saw a "fiery red" horse whose rider was allowed to "take peace from the earth," with the result that people killed one another (chapter 6:3, 4).

The opening of the **THIRD SEAL** disclosed a black horse whose rider carried scales for the measuring and selling of the grains used for making bread—a sign of severe famine. And the opening of the **FOURTH SEAL** revealed a "pale" horse upon which sat "Death, and Hades [or the grave] followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" (v. 8).

As you saw in the vision of the seven churches, the four horsemen of Revelation show God's work on earth beginning well but soon running into trouble. New Testament scholar Jon Paulien develops the picture:

> "First, there was the initial, rapid expansion of the church throughout much of the then-known world. The succeeding period brought division and compromise in the face of persecution. The loss of a clear understanding of the gospel followed as the church settled into an earthly kingdom in the years after Constantine. Finally, the Dark Ages of spiritual decline and death engulfed Christendom" (*Symposium I*, 234).

In the covenant God established with His people in the Old Testament, He warned that the disobedient would suffer war (sword), famine, and pestilence. Those who responded with rebellion to the warnings these "curses" brought would someday feel their full effects. Those who remained faithful to God or repented of their wandering might suffer persecution, but they would know His salvation.

The opening of the fifth seal marks the turning point in this time of trouble. And in it and the sixth seal, we catch glimpses of these two groups, the obstinate and those who have turned to God.

"How Long, O Lord?"

At the opening of the **FIFTH SEAL**, God's people, the "martyrs," cry for help: "How long, O Lord, ... until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth" (v. 10). John relayed the answer that was given them—it was just "a little while longer" until God's plan reached full fruition.

Connected with the opening of the **SIXTH SEAL** are the cosmic signs that both Old and New Testament prophecies

***This scroll** would certainly include Daniel's prophecies, but might more generically represent all the prophecies God has given regarding end-time events.*

***The limited scope** of the horsemen's activities (to "a fourth of the earth") indicates that we're not seeing here the plagues and destruction of the end time.*



Read Joel 2:30, 31 and Matthew 24:29–31 for more insight into these cosmic signs.

indicate would mark earth's final days and the second coming of Christ: a great earthquake, darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars.

As the last of these signs reveal the imminence of Christ's return, rather than welcoming what to Christians is "the blessed hope," the rebellious cry out in fear of what is to them "the great day of His wrath" and try to hide from the Lamb (vs. 15–17).

Next, in Revelation 7, John's attention was turned from the seals that were being broken open to a people who are being sealed. This tangent contains God's answer to the martyrs of the fifth seal. John saw...

> "... a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues. ... These are the ones who have come out of great tribulation. ... The Lamb ... will shepherd them. ... And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (vs. 9, 14–17).

Signs of Christ's second coming according to the sixth seal include earthquakes, darkening of the sun & moon, and the falling of the stars.

In other words, though the people of earth will go through a time of terrible trouble, God has marked—sealed—those who are His. This interlude between the sixth and seventh seals offers hope by revealing the results of God's plan—the salvation of His people, the time when their suffering will be forever ended.

This section of Revelation ends with the brief statement that at the opening of the **SEVENTH SEAL** "there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" (chapter 8:1). The number seven represents completeness. The sixth seal brought the signs of the imminent return of Christ. And Jesus said that when He returns, all the angels will accompany Him.

Apparently, then, the opening of the seventh seal marks the completion of earth's history and of God's work for human beings—the second coming of Christ, which leaves heaven temporarily silent because all its inhabitants have come to rescue God's people on earth. What better ending could one find to a vision of seven seals! R

***Matthew 25:31 says**, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory."*



Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets

What You'll Learn

What Revelation's trumpets symbolize

The purpose of the "bittersweet book"

The "Second Advent Awakening"

NO SOONER HAD JOHN'S VISION OF THE SEVEN SEALS CONCLUDED THAN ANOTHER VISION BEGAN. LIKE THAT OF THE SEVEN SCROLLS, THIS VISION BEGAN IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY. JOHN SAW AN ANGEL OFFERING INCENSE "WITH THE PRAYERS OF ALL THE SAINTS" (REVELATION 8:3) ON THE GOLDEN ALTAR IN GOD'S PRESENCE—A SYMBOL OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY MINISTRY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE CHOSEN TO PLACE THEIR LIVES IN HIS HANDS.

FOLLOW ALONG: Revelation Chapters 8–11

This vision also involves the number seven, which indicates that it, too, was intended to reveal earth's history through the end of time. The central symbol of this vision is the trumpet. The book of Joel contains the key passage for understanding why this symbol is used here. Joel 2 begins with these words:

> *Blow the trumpet in Zion,*
> *And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!*
> *Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble;*
> *For the day of the* LORD *is coming,*
> *For it is at hand.*

Joel goes on to warn of an army of locusts that threatens God's people. And then he tells how they should respond to the trumpeted alarm:

> *"Now, therefore," says the* LORD,
> *"Turn to me with all your heart, ...*
> *Return to the* LORD *your God,*
> *For He is gracious and merciful"*
> *(verses 12, 13).*

In Revelation, as in Joel, the sounding of the trumpet calls God's people to repentance and renewal of their relationship with Him in view of the judgments that are about to fall on the earth. And these are the judgments of the last days—the final judgment.

In ancient Israel, the seven monthly "new moon" feasts climaxed in the Feast of Trumpets (the first day of the seventh month of the religious year). And the sounding of the trumpets during this religious festival ushered

> *Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.*
> —REVELATION 15:1

in the Day of Atonement, the ceremonial holy day by which God depicted His ultimate judgment day. The sounding of the trumpets served to remind the Israelites that they had but a few days left before they must stand before God's judgment seat. Those who refused to prepare for that experience were cast out from among His people forever.

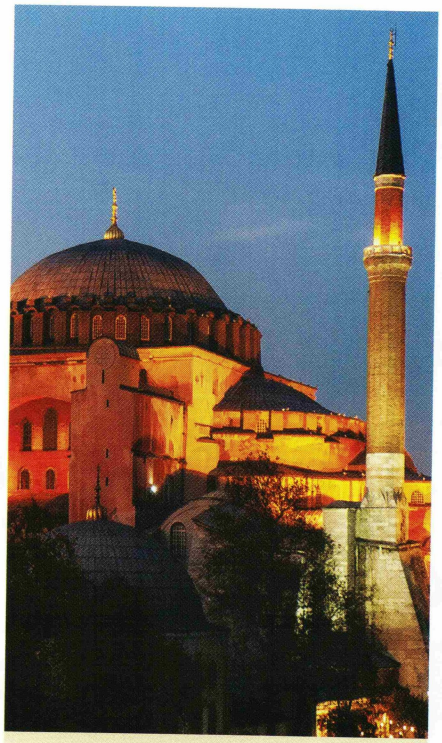
Trumpets and Plagues

Revelation's chiastic structure is nowhere more obvious than in the parallel visions of the trumpets and the plagues (chapter 16). The first of each concerns the earth; the second, the sea; the third, the rivers and springs of water, and so forth, right on through the two series. But there is one clear and consistent distinction:

> The destructive forces released under the plagues are universal, while those released under the trumpets are restricted. For example,
>
> - When the second trumpet sounds, "a third of the sea became blood; and a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed" (8:8, 9).
>
> - But when the second plague is poured out on the sea, it becomes like blood, and every living creature in it dies (16:3).

As in the seals, the partial destructions of the trumpets signal that these are preliminary warning judgments—as contrasted with final, retributive judgments.

The text makes clear also that the trumpets, like the seals, are sequential rather than simultaneous. The sounding of each trumpet is followed immediately by the action it introduces, and only then is the next trumpet sounded. And each trumpet that follows the first is introduced by the word "then," an indication of chronological sequence.



Aya Sofya, or Haghia Aghia Sophia, was the greatest Christian cathedral of the Middle Ages, later converted into an imperial mosque by the Ottoman Empire, and is now a museum.

The vision of the seven churches depicts the spiritual decline of God's people from the establishment of Christianity until just before Christ's return. When God's Old Testament people reneged on their spiritual commitments, God, as a last resort, sent them warning calls to repentance via the harassment of their enemies, the Assyrians and Babylonians.

That's exactly the picture this vision of the trumpets conveys regarding God's New Testament church and its oppressors. This vision showed what God would do to call His wan-dering people back to Him. In his book *Outline Studies in Revelation*, Professor Edwin Thiele makes the fol-lowing summary of the seven trumpets:

> **[1]** The first trumpet symbolizes the Divine judgments that came upon *Jerusalem and the Jewish nation* when it set itself against Christ and His followers; **[2]** the second symbolizes judgments upon the *western Roman world*; **[3]** the third fell upon the professed *church of Christ* when it allowed itself to become defiled and sent forth streams of death rather than life; **[4]** the fourth was the ensuing *darkness of the Middle Ages*; **[5]** the fifth constituted the *Mohammedan scourges* that swept over the Middle East and into Europe; **[6]** the sixth consisted of the scourges that continued under *Turkish control* of large sections of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The Trumpet Sound

The symbolism in this vision extends beyond the trumpets themselves, of course. The "hail," "fire," and "blood" of the **FIRST TRUMPET** are biblical symbols of battle. And "trees" and "grass" represent God's people. In this trumpet, judgment begins with the house of God. The **SECOND TRUMPET'S** "mountain" is the biblical symbol for a nation, and the "sea" represents masses of people—fit symbols for the Germanic nations' attack on the Roman Empire.

In the **THIRD TRUMPET**, the "great star" named "Wormwood" that fell from heaven represents Satan. And the "springs of water" are the sources of spiritual life. Here we see the teachings of Christ corrupted, hindering His work on earth. This was fulfilled during the Middle Ages. And **TRUMPET FOUR**, which affects the lights in the heavens, sees this attack extended to the heavenly ministry of Christ, the Light of the world.

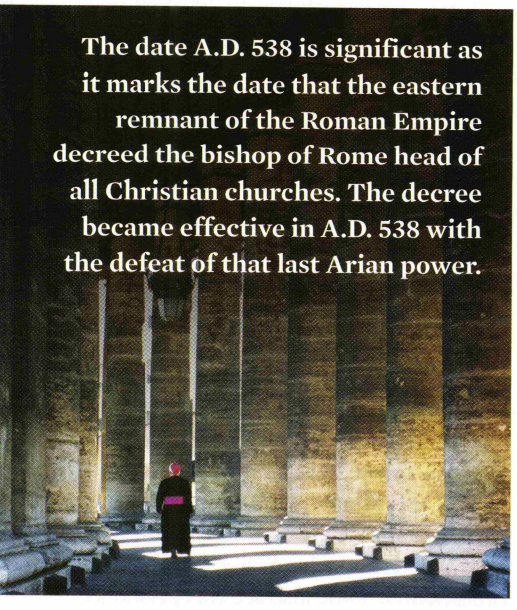
The **FIFTH TRUMPET** depicts the attack of the Islamic Arabs on the Christian world. Some interpreters, using the principle that in biblical prophecy a day represents a year of literal time, see in the line "their power was to hurt men five months" a reference to the Arabs' attempts throughout a 150-year period to take Constantinople, the capital of what remained of the Byzantine Empire and headquarters of the eastern branch of Christianity. Some also see this period as a reign of secular atheism.

The **SIXTH TRUMPET** continues with representations of the Islamic Turks. Its "fire, smoke, and brimstone" might well represent their use of gunpowder, which enabled them to do what the Arabs hadn't been able to do—capture Constantinople. There is also support for this trumpet marking the rise of end-time Babylon.

When the **SEVENTH TRUMPET** sounds, "loud voices" in heaven announce, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (11:15). Earth's history ends. God terminates the rule of the nations that oppressed His people, and He sets up His kingdom of justice and peace that shall rule forever.

Verse 19 speaks of the temple of God being opened so that the Ark of the Covenant can be seen. The only time a human saw the ark was on the Day of Atonement, which, as we have noted above, represented the final judgment. And verse 18 confirms this interpretation when it says that with this trumpet comes "the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that [God] should reward [His] servants ... and should destroy those who destroy the earth."

"The two witnesses/lampstands represent God's Word in the Old and New Testaments, which gives light to the world and testifies to His love."



The date A.D. 538 is significant as it marks the date that the eastern remnant of the Roman Empire decreed the bishop of Rome head of all Christian churches. The decree became effective in A.D. 538 with the defeat of that last Arian power.

A Bittersweet Book

As in the vision of the seven seals, an interlude interrupts this vision between its sixth and seventh parts. In a takeoff on Ezekiel's vision, an angel handed John a little "book," or scroll, and told him to eat it. But while Ezekiel was simply told his scroll would taste sweet as honey, Revelation's angel told John the scroll would be as sweet as honey in his mouth, but that it would also make his stomach bitter. (See Revelation 10:8–11; compare Ezekiel 3:1–4.)

Then, after telling John to measure the temple of God, another reference to the Day of Atonement judgment, the angel related the story of two witnesses, which he described as being two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before the Lord (11:4). These witnesses were to prophesy for "one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (v. 3)—the same period for which the previous verse says the "Gentiles" will "tread the holy city underfoot." Then the "beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit" will kill these witnesses and "their dead bodies will lie in the street of the city that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt" for three-and-a-half days, at which the people of earth will rejoice. But ultimately, God will resurrect them and bring them up to heaven, while a great earthquake will destroy a tenth of the city and kill seven thousand men, causing those left alive to give glory to God (vs. 7–13).

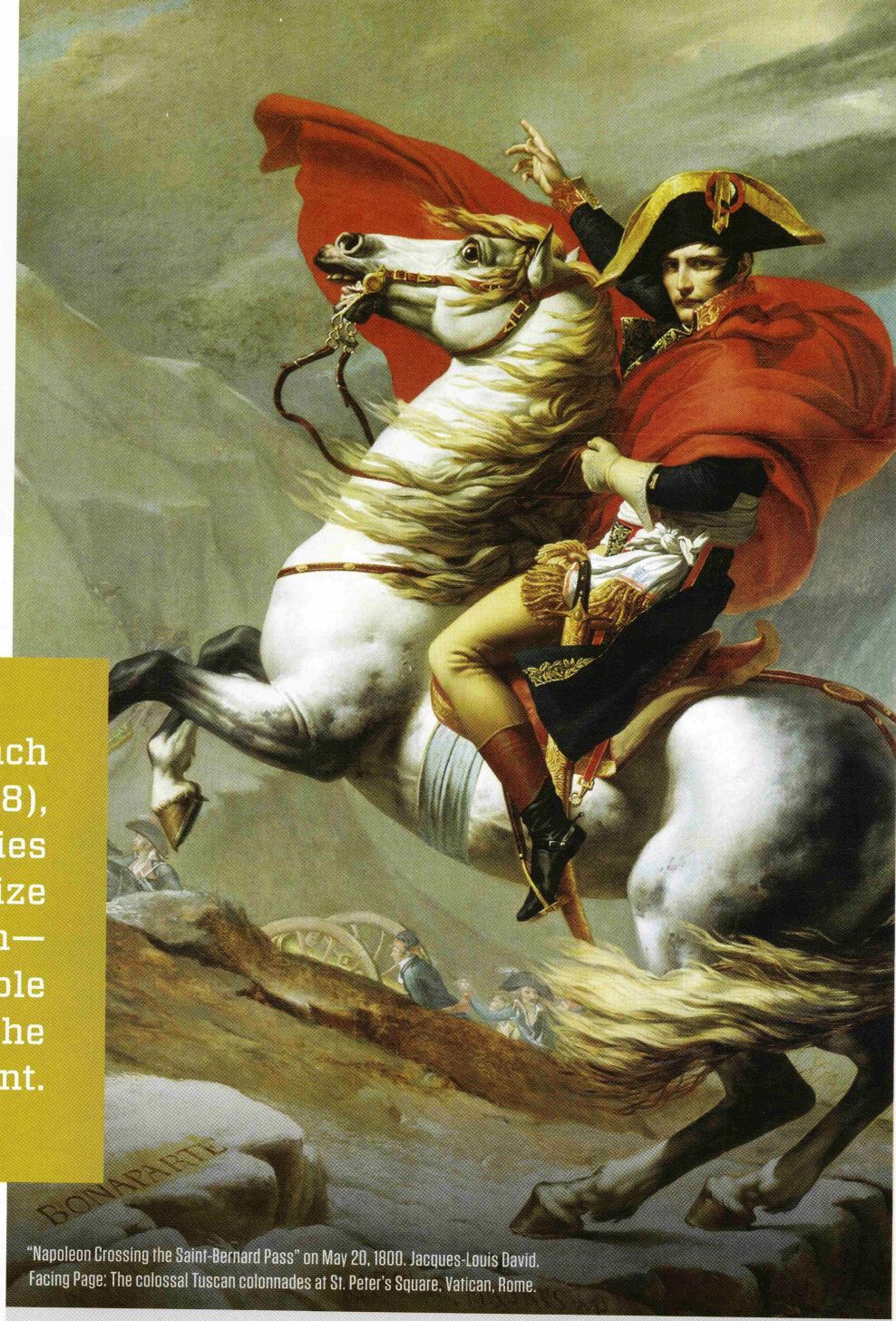
The two witnesses/lampstands represent God's Word in the Old and New Testaments, which gives light to the world and testifies to His love. The 1,260 days of Gentile domination of the Holy City represents the 1,260 years God's people would suffer oppression by people who have aligned themselves against God. Daniel 7 makes clear this period extends from A.D. 538 to 1798. Its closing years saw the epoch-changing French Revolution.

But that "earthquake" was followed by God's resurrection of His two witnesses. As we noted when looking at the sixth church, the 19th century was characterized by great religious awakenings and by the strongest missionary movement since the time of the apostles. And it saw the development of various Bible societies, which began the still-continuing effort to make the gospel available in every language spoken on this globe. God's two witnesses couldn't have become more alive!

And what of the bittersweet little book? Some scholars understand it to represent the "Second Advent Awakening" of the 19th century, a time in which faithful Christians believed they found in the Bible's prophecies of the end times, and particularly in Daniel's time prophecies, evidence that Jesus was coming in their lifetime. This message stirred a great revival on the North American continent. The failure of their hopes on October 22, 1844, appropriately represented by the scroll's ultimate bitterness, became known as the Great Disappointment.

What was to them a disappointment, however, becomes an additional reason for us to hope. It adds further confirmation of the accuracy of the prophecies of Revelation—prophecies that tell us we truly are living in the time of the end, the days just before Jesus returns to set up His glorious kingdom. R

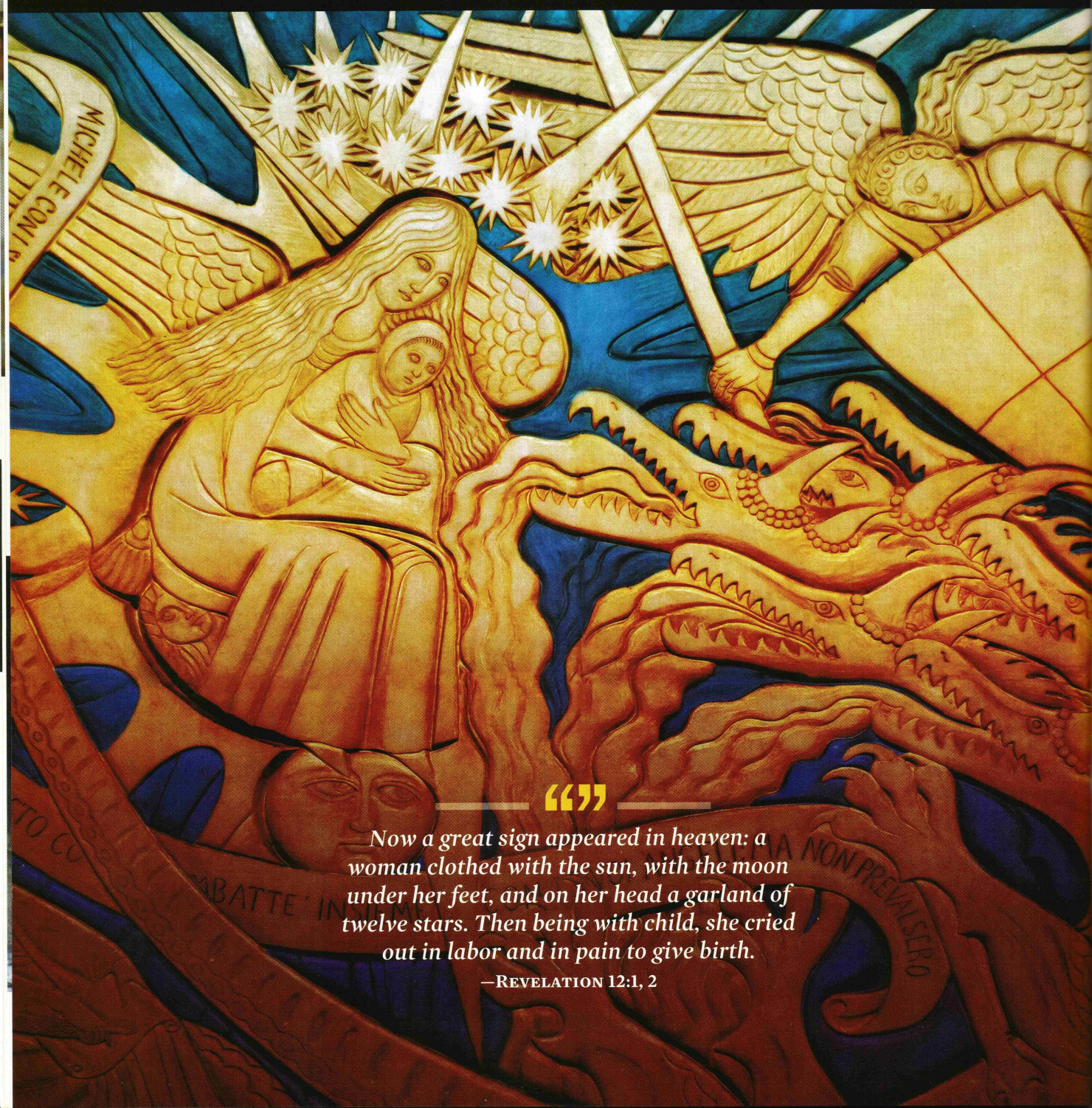
During the French Revolution (1793–1798), the revolutionaries sought to de-Christianize the whole nation—discarding the Bible as antithetical to the Enlightenment.



"Napoleon Crossing the Saint-Bernard Pass" on May 20, 1800. Jacques-Louis David.
Facing Page: The colossal Tuscan colonnades at St. Peter's Square, Vatican, Rome.

Napoleon Bonaparte was a French military and political leader who rose to prominence during the latter stages of the French Revolution and its associated wars in Europe. He sent General Alexander Berthier to Rome where on February 16, 1798, he took the pope captive and decreed that "the pope should no longer exercise any function."

The Heart of Revelation
Battle of the Ages



Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

—Revelation 12:1, 2

What You'll Learn

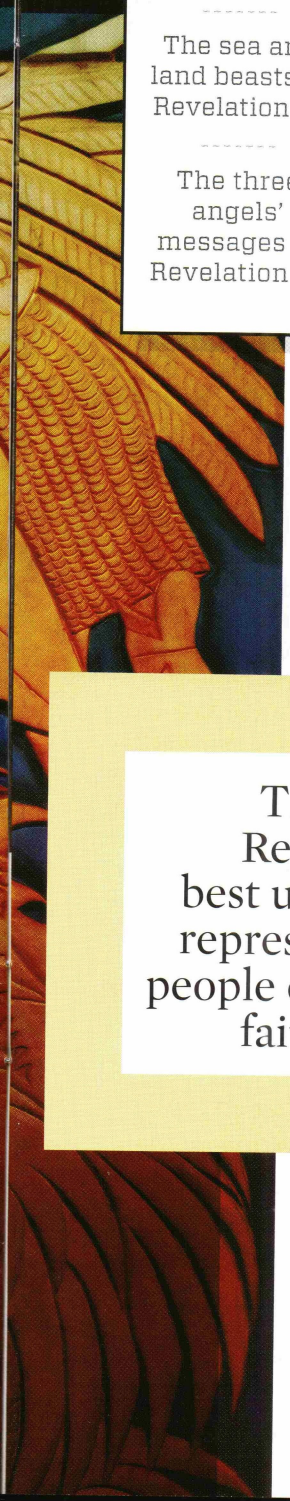
Who is the woman, child, and dragon of Revelation 12

The sea and land beasts of Revelation 13

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14

IN REVELATION CHAPTERS 12–14, WE COME TO THE VERY HEART OF THE BOOK, THE FOCUS OF THE CHIASM THAT FORMS ITS STRUCTURE. THESE CHAPTERS MARK THE DIVISION BETWEEN THE HISTORICAL AND ESCHATOLOGICAL (END-TIME) PARTS OF REVELATION. HERE THE POWERS BEHIND THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE THAT OCCURS ON EARTH—THOSE WHO WILL FIGURE DIRECTLY IN THE FINAL EVENTS—ARE REVEALED EVEN MORE CLEARLY. AND HERE WE SEE OUR PLACE IN THE TIMELINE OF HISTORY; HERE WE SEE THAT WE TRULY ARE LIVING IN EARTH'S LAST DAYS.

FOLLOW ALONG: Revelation Chapters 11–14



As did the visions of the churches, seals, and trumpets, this vision originates from God's temple in heaven. The setting is God's throne room, the Most Holy Place of His temple and, specifically, the place where the "the ark of His covenant" is kept.

The ark is notable because it holds the Ten Commandments, which forms the foundation of God's government. The "lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail" mentioned in this verse remind us of the events at the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses (see Exodus 20:18). As we will see, the conflict between God and Satan centers on God's law and His authority.

Revelation 12 introduces these three characters:

1. "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars"
2. "a great, fiery red dragon"
3. "a male Child"

The woman of Revelation 12 is best understood as representing God's people on earth, His faithful church.

Verse 9 comes right out and identifies the dragon. It is "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan." This identification indicates that behind chapter 12's symbolism lies, at least in part, the Genesis account of humankind's fall into sin.

The identity of the Child is revealed by the events chapter 12 narrates as happening to Him. He was threatened by Satan at birth (v. 4), destined "to rule all nations with a rod of iron" (a messianic role), and "caught up to God and to His throne" (v. 5). Clearly, this child represents Christ—the promised Seed who was to end the serpent's life by crushing his head (Genesis 3:15).

The Cosmic Woman

Who, then, is the woman of chapter 12?

Because she gives birth to Christ, we might first suppose she represents Mary. But the description in the rest of the chapter suggests otherwise for at least three reasons:

1. The woman of Revelation 12 was to experience intense persecution; there's no indication in Scripture that Mary was particularly persecuted following either Christ's birth or His ascension.

2. Like both the book of Daniel and the previous chapter of Revelation, this chapter speaks of a 1,260-day period of persecution. As we have seen before, the 1,260 prophetic days represent 1,260 literal years—a period that obviously couldn't apply to the earthly life of any individual.

3. This prophecy has a cosmic sweep that suggests it functions on a larger scale than any one person could fit.

In fact, the woman of Revelation 12 is best understood as representing God's people on earth, His faithful church. This "woman" and her "offspring" (v. 17)—the 144,000 who are "virgins," "not defiled with women" (14:3, 4)—comprise the theme against which Revelation 17 and 18 play the counterpoint of the harlot woman Babylon and her prostitute daughters.

Scripture frequently uses a woman as a symbol of God's people; see, for example, Hosea 2:19, 20; Isaiah 54:1-8; Ezekiel 16:8-14; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:21-23.

Clearly, Babylon and her daughters are not individual people but symbols of all who have been unfaithful to God and who have opposed His followers. That implies that the woman in Revelation similarly represents a group rather than an individual and, because she stands in clear contrast to the harlot, that she represents God's faithful people.

The woman, then, stands, first of all, for God's Old Testament people (Revelation 12:1–5), the Jews, who gave birth to Christ, the Messiah. Most of Revelation 12, however, concerns His people from the time of Christ on (12:6–17). So for the most part, this symbol represents His church from New Testament times to the end.

The first six verses of chapter 12 introduce the characters: God's people (the woman), Satan (the dragon), and Christ (the Child). These verses also introduce the themes of the drama: Satan wants to kill Jesus. But Christ will be protected and, in fact, exalted to a position of authority. Meanwhile, the woman, though under God's care, will experience persecution.

The next six verses of chapter 12 tell us that the conflict between good and evil that wracks the earth has also affected heaven: "War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ... and his angels" (v. 7).

Michael is Christ—though this no more makes Him merely an angel than does the fact that chapter 5 calling Him a Lamb makes Him merely an animal.

Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 suggest that Satan—"Lucifer," the "covering cherub"—was first cast out of heaven before Christ's incarnation. But he suffered his pivotal defeat at the cross, and this passage seems to have that battle primarily in mind. (See also John 12:31; Colossians 2:15; 1 Peter 3:22; Jude 6.)

These verses conclude with a warning meant for everyone on earth, the "inhabitants" of both "the earth and the sea." "The devil has come down to you with great wrath," it says, "because he knows his time is short!" (NRSV).

Revelation 12:13 picks up the theme verse 6 introduced: Satan's persecution of God's people. Again, the warning of impending persecution is accompanied by a promise of God's help. The woman is given wings so that she can fly into the wilderness—a reminder of the escape God provided Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the wilderness. And when the "serpent" tries to drown the woman, the earth swallows the flood and so saves her. All this takes place during the period here called a "time and times and half a time" (v. 14)—a direct reference to Daniel 7:25 and the prophecy of the little horn's persecution of God's people for a "time and times and half a time," and, of course, a repeat in different terms of the 1,260 days of verse 6. (More about this period later.)

As the curtain descends on this scene of the prophetic drama, we see Satan "enraged" because his attempts to eliminate God's people have been foiled. But he's not ready to give up. Instead, verse 17 says, he starts "to make war with the rest of her offspring"—a group the verse characterizes as people who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Revelation 19:9, 10; 22:6–9, make clear that the **"testimony of Jesus Christ"** is not the saints' testimony about Jesus, but rather the testimony that He has given to the church through the spiritual gift of prophecy, which 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 and Ephesians 4 indicate was to function continuously in the church. In other words, the spiritual gift of prophecy will be seen in God's end-time church.

In John 4:22, Jesus says, "Salvation is of the Jews."

Chapter 13: The Universal War

Revelation 12 ends with a warning about a war between Satan and God's people. Chapters 13 and 14 detail that war and the results it brings to both sides. The time frame these chapters cover begins essentially with the start of the 1,260-year prophecy—A.D. 538—and extends through end-time events right up to Christ's second coming.

The war described in these chapters will allow no neutral parties. Eventually, all the people of the world will follow and worship the first beast described here (vs. 3, 12, 16)—all, that is, except the "virgins" who have not fallen for the seductions of the "woman" Babylon and her harlot daughters, the "saints" who have kept "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (14:4, 12).

John's description of the first beast of chapter 13 helps us to identify it. The parallels to the creatures of Daniel 7 are striking and are intentional. This beast, like those, rises from the sea. It is, in fact, a summary of them: part lion, bear, and leopard, and bearing the horns of Daniel's fourth beast.

Verse 4 suggests that when Satan rebelled against God, a substantial portion of the angels joined him. (Stars, in Revelation, often represent angels—see chapter 1:20.)

Remember: *Daniel's four beasts represented the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the 10 horns, the Germanic tribes that would overthrow Rome. The crowns on the horns probably indicate that this prophecy concerns the time of their sovereignty. The seven heads and ten horns of chapter 12 show its close connection to Daniel's empires (Satan, the dragon, is the power behind all the thrones represented), and the crowns on the heads likely indicate that the action of that chapter takes place during the time of the empires rather than of the Germanic tribes.*



The woman and dragon of Revelation 12.

But while the make-up of Revelation's "sea beast" relates it to the empires and nations of Daniel's prophecy, it most closely resembles Daniel's little horn power. It wields both religious and political power:

- It accepts worship (vs. 4, 8) and uses civil force to accomplish its purposes—"authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation" (v. 7).
- It blasphemes God and His tabernacle (sanctuary) and then makes war on the saints.
- And, as in the case of Daniel's little horn, God allows it this rule for a 1,260-year period.

Daniel 7 clearly links the beginning of this period of persecution with the fall of the Roman Empire. At that time, the medieval Christian church was the leading force in Western civilization, the dominating religious-political entity. We've already noted the church-sponsored violence of the medieval period. As for the rest of John's description, that church directed people's attention away from God with claims that the pope was, literally, God on earth. And in place of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice for us and His continuing ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, it substituted masses, indulgences, pilgrimage, and other meritorious works.

Chapter 13:3 pictures an attempt on the sea beast's life: "I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded." In 1797, the French revolutionary government wrote to Napoleon that the "Roman religion" would always be "an irreconcilable enemy of the Republic," and so it asked him to "destroy, if possible, the center of unity of the Roman Church." Napoleon sent General Alexander Berthier to Rome, where, on February 15, 1798, he took the pope captive and decreed that "the pope should no longer exercise any function."[1]

Popes had been taken captive before this incident but never in an attempt to destroy the Roman Church itself. A century later, Joseph Rickaby, a Jesuit priest, observed that when this pope passed away as a French prisoner, "half Europe thought ... that with the Pope the Papacy was dead."[2]

But Revelation said this "deadly wound" would be healed. In time, in other words, the world would again see the rise of a "Christian" religious institution that used political power to obtain the worship of "all who dwell on the earth," all "whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (v. 8).

In chapter 17:5, John called this apostate Christian body "the mother of harlots." Apparently, in the end times, the problem won't be limited to one institution. However pure its origin, any cult, sect, or church that attempts to force its understanding of Christianity on other people comes under God's condemnation.

Beast from the Earth

As the vision continues, John sees a second beast arise and aid the first one in achieving its goals. This second beast comes up "out of the earth," which signifies several things:

- For one, it suggests that what follows moves beyond Daniel's vision, which was limited to creatures of the sea. Revelation's account offers more details than what Daniel gave.

References

1. A. Aulard, *Christianity and the French Revolution*, Lady Frazer, trans. (London, 1927), 151.
2. Joseph Rickaby, "The Modern Papacy," in *Lectures on the History of Religions* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 191 0), vol. 3, lecture 24, p. 1.

- Second, the fact that one beast arises out of the sea and one out of the earth emphasizes the worldwide scope of this prophecy. Chapter 12:12 contains a similar thought: "Woe to the inhabitants of the *earth* and the *sea!* For the devil has come down to you" (emphasis supplied). It is the same earth that saved the woman from the flooding waters of the dragon in Revelation 12.

- And third, some commentators have seen in this beast's earthly origin a clue to its identity. Revelation 17:15 indicates that in some symbolic prophecies, water represents multitudes of people. Beasts arising from the sea, then, represent nations or empires built in the populous areas of the world—which is certainly true of the empires of Daniel 7 and of the first half of Revelation 13. Conversely, a beast that comes up out of the earth would represent a nation or empire arising in a relatively unpopulated area, such as the Western Hemisphere was before the Europeans arrived there. This interpretation is particularly fitting because of the timing of this part of the vision. The land beast becomes active after the healing of the sea beast's deadly wound—in other words, sometime after 1798. So this line of reasoning suggests the land beast represents the United States.

John described this beast as having "two horns like a lamb" (v. 11). Everywhere else in Revelation where a lamb is mentioned, it represents Christ. The land beast, then, appears to be Christian. But the very next words reveal its true character:

> John said that it "spoke like a dragon," that it causes those who dwell on earth "to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed," and that it encourages them to make an image to the sea beast and then brings that image to life (vs. 11, 12, 15).

The sea beast uses political power to enforce its demands for worship. With the land beast's aid, this "image of the beast" mirrors its original. Their methods are those of Satan: miracles, deception, and coercion—the very things both Jesus and Paul warned of in relation to the end of the world.

Read Matthew 24:24 and 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. Through the rest of Revelation, the beast with the lamb-like horns is called the "false prophet." See chapters 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. With the dragon and the sea beast, it comprises an evil counterfeit trinity that stands in opposition to the Divine Trinity.

Revelation says this beast will use both economic coercion (v. 18) and, ultimately, the threat of death (v. 15). Those who succumb to the earthly beast's pressure and worship the sea beast "receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads" (v. 16). This "mark of the beast" figures prominently in chapter 14.

Chapter 14: Spotlight on Hope

What a relief the next verses of Revelation bring! After all the talk of war and deception and people knuckling under the pressure to worship someone other than God, John points to a group who has proven faithful—the 144,000, whom we saw also in chapter 7. As in that chapter, the portrayal of this group forms a little interlude in the prophecy, giving us hope by assuring us that despite all the pressures being applied, God's grace can enable people to remain faithful, "undefiled" by the temptations of false religion. Some people will sing a new song before God's throne. Some will "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" throughout eternity.

Having been reassured that a sizable number of people will withstand the wiles and coercion of the dragon and the two beasts, John was shown what heaven would do during the time of the beasts. John wrote that he saw three angels flying "in the midst of heaven," each bringing a message of warning to earth's inhabitants.

The **FIRST ANGEL**, John said, has the "everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (14:6). When Jesus listed for His disciples the signs that would indicate His coming was near, He said, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). God's final warning, then, is a gospel message. It will tell all people about His coming kingdom of peace; it will tell them how they can prepare to enter that kingdom.

The American Colonial Flag, designed during the American Revolutionary War, features 13 stars to represent the original 13 colonies.

In Revelation 11-14, *some commentators have seen clues to the earthly identity of the land beast that arose after 1798.*



The angels of Revelation 14 are symbols of God's end-time people, who, like Noah and the other prophets of old, deliver God's final warning.

John pictured an angel carrying this warning message to all the people of earth. But Jesus commissioned His followers to bear the gospel message to the world: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20; see also Acts 1:8). The angels of Revelation 14 are symbols of God's end-time people, who, like Noah and the other prophets of old, deliver God's final warning.

The first part of this warning calls earth's inhabitants to worship the Creator God "for the hour of His judgment has come" (v. 7). The end-time judgment for which the fifth seal pictures the martyrs appealing has begun (Revelation 6:9–11).

When Scripture speaks of a people's relationship to God, "fornication" refers to unfaithfulness, to putting one's faith in something other than God and accepting false doctrines.

The **SECOND ANGEL'S MESSAGE** warns that the great city Babylon "is fallen" (v. 8). Babylon was ancient Judah's greatest oppressor, the city-state that not only conquered God's Old Testament people, but also broke up their nation, destroying their cities, including Jerusalem, and taking most of the population into exile.

But Babylon's threat to God's people came not only in its oppression. When Babylon fell to another empire's army, the new emperors allowed the exiled Jews to return to their homeland and restore their nation. The majority of the Jews, however, had become comfortable in Babylon. Rather than face the struggle of rebuilding a nation, they stayed in their adopted homeland. Thus, this second message warns of the intoxicating wine of Babylon's "fornication."

Daniel said that Babylon's greatest ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, had accepted God. But later rulers of that nation returned to their heathen gods. That's what made Babylon a harlot. And the Jews who remained in Babylon faced the strong temptation to compromise their religion and adapt to local beliefs. No doubt, many did.

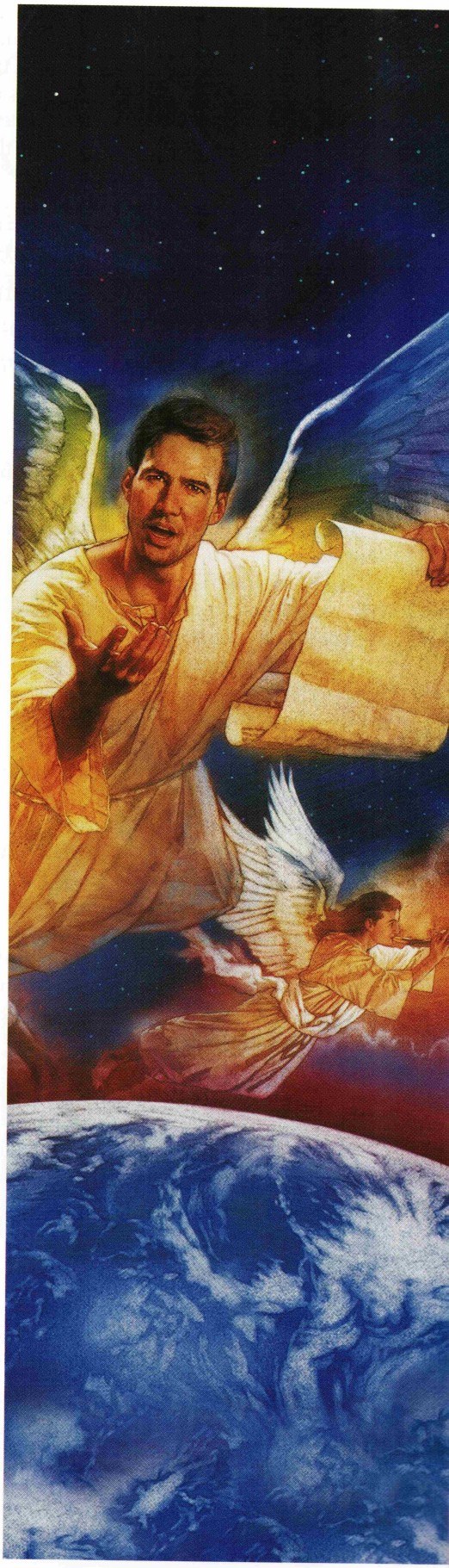
Of course, the Babylon against which Revelation warns is not that ancient city. It's the Babylon of this time. The message says that the time of God's judgment has come; the oppressors of His people have fallen. It's time to leave, to go home. See Revelation 18:1–4.

This message warns against staying in Babylon, against compromising one's faith in God to enjoy the comforts and luxuries available to those who conform to the demands of contemporary society and of "Christian" religious institutions that have drifted away from God.

The Wine of God's Wrath

The **THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE** tells what will happen to those who stay in Babylon. It says that those who drink the wine of Babylon will also drink the wine of God, the wine of His wrath (14:10). In other words, they will suffer the eternal death that comes to those who continue in sin. They will be burned up in the fires that God will use to cleanse the earth when He is ready to restore the paradise He originally intended this planet to be, a paradise in which sin and pain and death will never again exist.

This part of the vision closes with another look at the "saints." Their "patience,"



or endurance, is pointed out, and they are identified as "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (v. 12), emphasizing their faithfulness to true religion.

The reference to the commandments of God returns to a theme we've seen before in this part of Revelation. This vision opened with a reference to the Ark of the Covenant (11:19), the temple furniture that held the Ten Commandments. And chapter 12 ended by identifying the end-time remnant of the true church as commandment keepers.

These faithful commandment keepers stand in contrast to those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark on their foreheads or on their hands (v. 9). This plays off the first commandment's prohibition of worshiping other gods and the second commandment's warning against bowing down to the image of any creature of heaven, earth, or the sea.

Herodotus said that a runaway slave who got the mark of Hercules at a temple in Egypt became the slave of that god, and even his former owner wasn't allowed to lay hands on him (*Persian Wars*, 2.113).

And just what is this **mark of the beast** that Revelation warns us about? In ancient times, devotees of various gods bore permanent marks, brands, on parts of their bodies. The marks identified them as under the supernatural protection of those gods. Therefore, the beast powers use a mark to distinguish their adherents from the faithful Christians who have refused to turn from their allegiance to God. It is the intention of the beast powers to flush out these faithful ones and then to wipe them off the earth.

Interestingly, while Revelation uses literally hundreds of Old Testament ideas and themes, it never quotes directly from the Old Testament. The closest it comes to doing so is in chapter 14:7, when it calls us to "worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." This is nearly a direct quotation from the fourth commandment, the Sabbath commandment.

As the commandment itself says, and as Revelation 14:7 reminds us, God gave the seventh-day Sabbath to serve as a perpetual reminder that He made us. In fact, He said He gave the Sabbath as a sign "that you may know that I am the LORD your God" (Ezekiel 20:20). It is because God made us that He has a right to our worship. The Sabbath functions as a sign, a mark, a seal, of our recognition of His authority.

On the other hand, complying with the sea beast's demands for worship means recognizing its authority as superior to God's. Significantly, the medieval Christian church claimed the change of the day of worship specified in God's Ten Commandment law (from Saturday to Sunday) is a mark of its authority.

The observance of these different days of worship certainly distinguishes in a simple way the different worshipers. Ultimately, however, the issue is not the day of worship; it is the matter of whose authority one recognizes.

When the warning messages of the three angels have been preached to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people," a harvest begins. Like the parable of the harvest that Jesus told, by which He represented the final judgment at the end of the world (see Matthew 12:24), this harvest has two parts.

- The first gathers in God's own people (14:14–16).
- The second deals with those who have turned from God (vs. 17–20).

Here the metaphor of the previous verses changes. Earlier, the unfaithful were warned they would drink the wine of God's wrath. Here they become that wine—thrown into the "great winepress of the wrath of God," from which runs an immense quantity of blood.

The vision of Revelation 12 to 14 reveals the great battle going on between Christ and the dragon, Satan. It says the battle concerns the allegiance of the people of earth; it concerns whom they recognize as the rightful ruler of the universe, whose law they will obey. It tells us the outcome of the battle and, in its picture of the 144,000 and of the harvests, the results for each side. And most important, it tells us that every human being will end up on one side or the other—and that ultimately it's our choice. Choose wisely! R

Petrus de Ancharano: *"The pope can modify divine law" (see Lucius Ferraris, Prompta Bibliotheca, 8 vols. [Venice: Caspa Storti, 1772], art. "Papa, II"). At the crucial Council of Trent, which formulated the church's response to the Reformation, the archbishop of Reggio claimed, "The Sabbath, the most glorious day in the law, has been changed into the Lord's day ... by the authority of the church" (Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum 33:529, 530).*

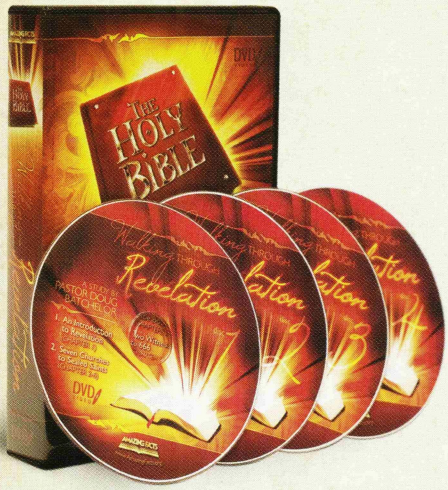
Catholic leaders meeting at Council of Trent during the Counter-Reformation.



UNLOCK

DANIEL & REVELATION

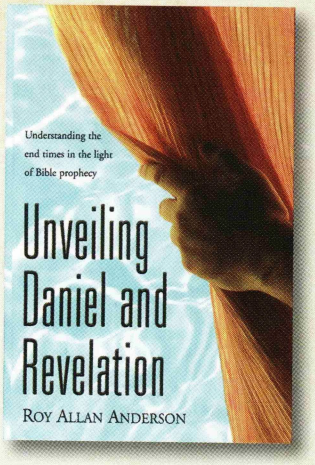
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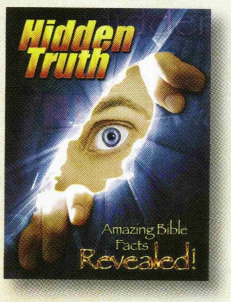
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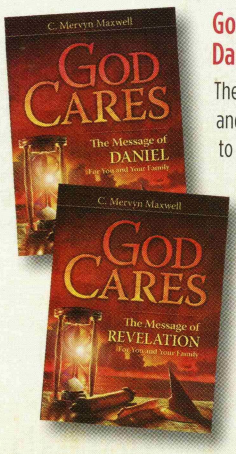
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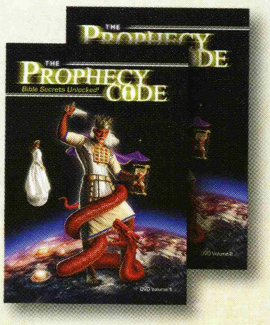
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Armageddon and the Final Plague

What You'll Learn

The scope and timing of the seven last plagues

The identity of the kings of the east

The nature of the battle of Armageddon

THE FOUR VISIONS THAT MAKE UP THE FIRST HALF OF REVELATION PARALLEL ONE ANOTHER, EACH REVEALING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN FROM JOHN'S DAY TO CHRIST'S SECOND COMING. THE VISIONS IN THE SECOND HALF OF REVELATION FOCUS SOLELY ON END-TIME EVENTS ...

FOLLOW ALONG: Revelation Chapters 15, 16

The first four visions of Revelation, the historical ones, show us why there must one day be a final judgment. The eschatological, or end-time, visions outline the consequences of this final judgment for both the rebellious and the faithful. The last four visions of Revelation also form a small chiasm within the larger chiasm of Revelation. This small chiasm's theme is the outcome of the choices the rebellious and the faithful have made:

1. FOCUS ON PUNISHMENT
   - **A** The plagues, 15:1–16:21.
     - **B** Circumstances related to the plagues: Fall of Babylon, the false mother, 17:1–19:10.
       Plague angel shows John the great harlot, 17:1–19:8. John attempts to worship the angel, 19:9, 10.

2. FOCUS ON REWARD
   - **B'** Circumstances related to the holy city: The millennium, 19:11–21:8.
     - **A'** The holy city: Descent of New Jerusalem, the Lamb's bride, 21:9–22:21. Plague angel shows John the Lamb's bride, 21:9–22:7. John attempts to worship the angel, 22:8, 9 (*God Cares* 2, 425).

A Song of Victory

The first verse of chapter 15 introduces us to the subject of this vision: "the seven last plagues" in which "the wrath of God is complete." In the next two verses, John wrote of seeing "those who have the victory over the beast ... standing on the sea of glass. ... And they sing the song of Moses ... and the song of the Lamb." These elements—the plagues and the song of victory sung beside the sea—tell us this vision is based on a familiar Old Testament story: the redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt.

> As Yahweh [God] vindicated His covenant and liberated Israel from the house of bondage by means of a series of plagues, so Christ will bring about the final deliverance of His faithful people by sending again a series of plagues (Hans K. LaRondelle, "Contextual Approach to the Seven Last Plagues," *Symposium II*, 143).

Other translations picture these people standing "beside the sea" as they sing these songs. See, for example, the New Revised Standard Version.



"The Great Day of His Wrath," John Martin, 1853.

Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.

—Revelation 16:8

As was the case in the previous visions of Revelation, the action in this vision proceeds from the heavenly temple.

Chapter 15 concludes with the observation that "the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God ... and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues" were completed. Revelation 22:11 says a time is coming when people will no longer be able to change. Those who are unjust will be unjust still, and those who are holy will be holy still. This last verse of chapter 15 indicates that the plagues will fall during that time. When no one can enter the temple, Christ's gracious work of interceding for sinners will have ended.

Chapter 16 then goes on to describe the effects as the individual plagues are poured out. Chapter 14 introduced the expression "the wine of the wrath of God." It's that wine the angels carrying the bowls deliver. That there are seven plagues also speaks of their fullness, their completeness.

It was noted earlier that in their content and in their place in Revelation's structure, the seven trumpets parallel the plagues. The trumpets were limited in their effect. They functioned as wake-up calls to earth's inhabitants, calling them to repentance so they needn't suffer the full effects of the judgment to come. By the time of the "seven *last* plagues" (chapter 15:1, emphasis supplied), however, everyone has decided either for or against God. There's no further intercession in the temple. The time of mercy, of God's grace, has passed. In these plagues God begins to carry out the verdict of His judgment.

Like the Plagues of Egypt

The first five plagues strike the persons and environment of those who have rejected God and oppressed His faithful followers. These plagues resemble closely those that fell on Egypt. And the results are much the same. Just as Pharaoh ultimately refused to acknowledge God and repent of his evil ways, so those who experience these plagues, rather than seeking God's mercy and grace, stubbornly refuse to repent. They're firmly committed to their rebellion against Him. Pharaoh's persistent rebellion resulted in his death, and that of his army, in the Red Sea. The rebellion of the end-time opposition of God, later chapters of Revelation say, will result in their death in a lake of fire.

With the sixth and seventh plagues, the imagery changes. Revelation continues to portray what God will do to rescue His faithful followers from those who would destroy them.

In Bible times, wine was usually served diluted. Chapter 14:10 warns that on the Day of Judgment, the wine of God's wrath won't be watered down; it will be served "full strength."

But the scene shifts from Egypt and Pharaoh and the Red Sea to "the great river Euphrates" (v. 12) and "the great city" "Babylon" (v.19).

Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Judah—his destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and depopulation of the land through death and exile—make Babylon the ultimate embodiment of evil in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. So Babylon's fall and the subsequent release and return of the Jewish exiles play a role equally important in salvation history as Israel's redemption from Egypt.

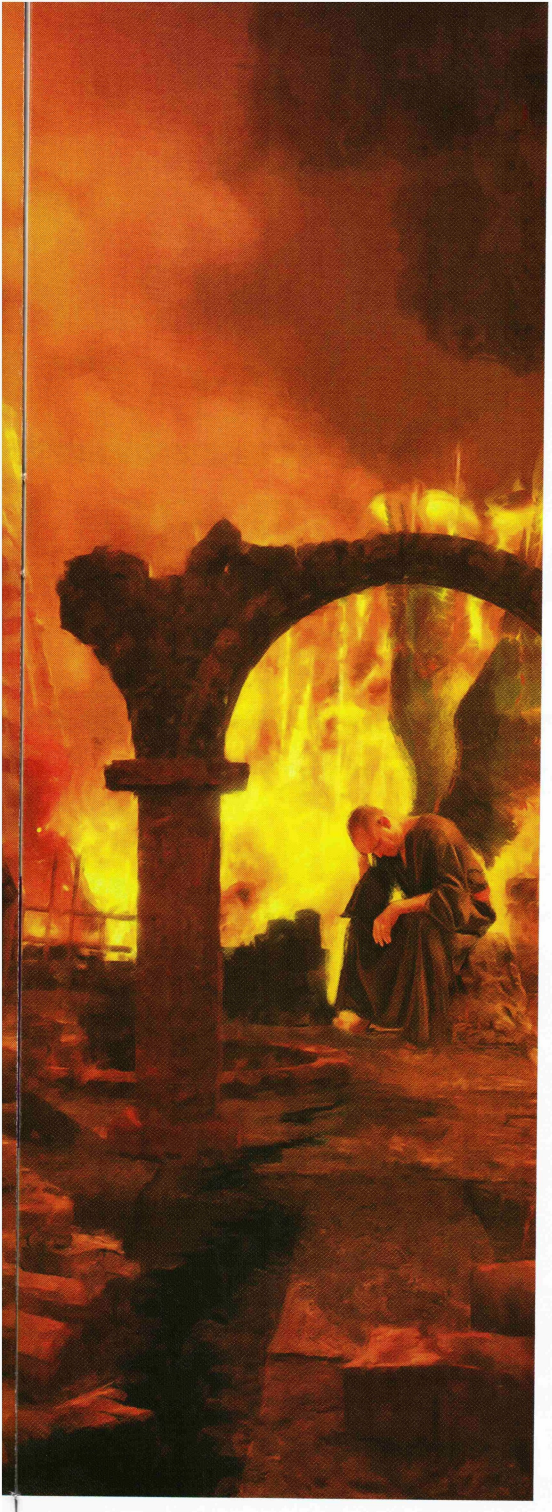
Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Greek historians Xenophon and Herodotus tell us how it happened. Cyrus united the Medes and the Persians, nations to the east of the Babylonian Empire. Eventually their combined forces laid siege to Babylon, capital of the empire. But Babylon was a strongly fortified city with ample stores of food, and the Euphrates River, which ran through the middle of the city, supplied it with plenty of water. Gates over the river kept enemy armies from slipping into the city via the riverbed.



"Inferno." Steve Creitz.

But the Medo-Persian army attacked Babylon when the Euphrates was low. In addition, according to the Greek historians, the Medo-Persian forces actually diverted the river to drop it even lower. So Cyrus's soldiers were able to slip under the river gates and, in a surprise attack, defeat the overconfident defenders of Babylon!

The sixth and seventh plagues of John's vision are portrayed in the terms



of this story. Verse 12 says the sixth plague will dry up the Euphrates to prepare the way of the kings from the east—an image obviously based on the drying of the Euphrates that facilitated the attack of the Medo-Persian army. The seventh plague follows with pictures of Babylon's destruction: the biggest earthquake this world has ever seen, the division of the city, and the statement that Babylon was remembered before God, receiving "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath" (v. 19).

Kings from the East

At this point, the rest of Revelation develops the picture briefly sketched in the sixth and seventh plagues. We'll close this section with a brief look at a few of the details given in those two plagues.

Cyrus and his generals were kings from the east who were the agents of Babylon's defeat—and thus also agents of the return of God's people to the Promised Land. Isaiah wrote of Cyrus in messianic terms (e.g., Isaiah 45:1). Significantly, the east gate of the temple Ezekiel described was permanently shut "because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it" (Ezekiel 44:2; also 43:4). Christ and the heavenly armies are the "kings from the east" of Revelation 16:12.

"Three unclean spirits" appear in the sixth plague (vs. 13, 14). These three spirits are demonic counterparts to the three angels of chapter 14. The angels proclaim the gospel to all nations, inviting people everywhere to join God's side in the great cosmic conflict that is about to begin. The demons work on behalf of the false trinity, gathering the kings of "the whole world to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Finally, the sixth plague says these forces gather for the final war at "Armageddon." For some people, the term Armageddon means a devastating global war. For others, it means a specific end-time war in the Middle East involving the Russians, Africans, Chinese, or nations of the West.

The term itself doesn't give us much help in determining the nature or location of this war. There is no place named Armageddon. The word might mean something like "mountain of Megiddo," but Megiddo is on a plain. Probably, like most of the other names in Revelation, it's meant to be symbolic. Only the context can help us understand it correctly.

1. In the sixth plague, the battle is called "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (v. 14). This is a biblical term for the universal judgment day of God.

2. "The kings ... of the whole earth" are called to this battle. Chapter 19:19 says they're all united with the beast against Christ and His army.

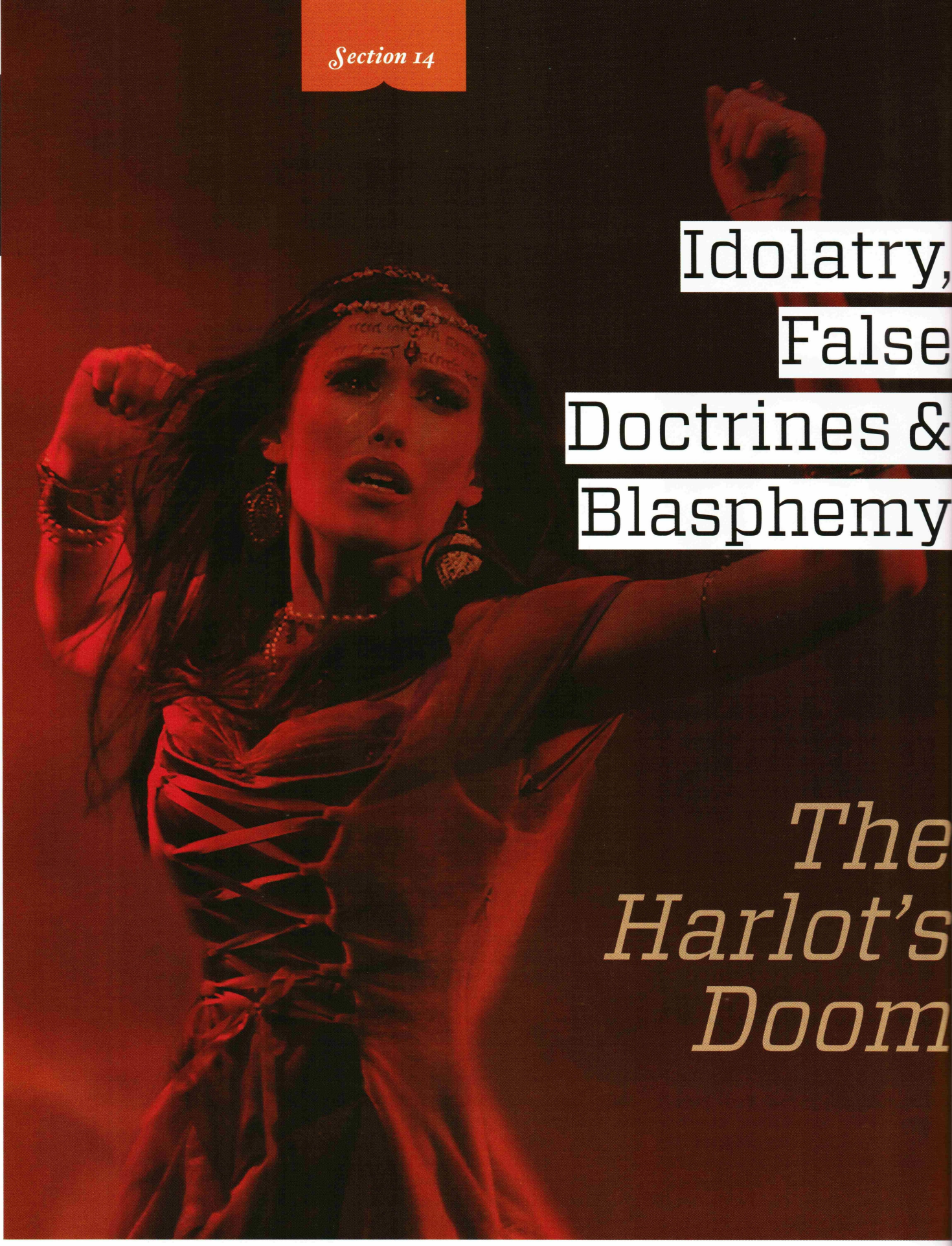
3. As noted earlier, the sixth and seventh plagues describe parts of the same event: the fall of Babylon. Revelation 17–19 elaborates further on this event. Those chapters, then, enlarge our understanding of the Bible's "battle of Armageddon." In the next section, you'll be looking at that part of Revelation.

It seems clear the Bible doesn't picture Armageddon as a battle between earth's nations. It will certainly involve actual bloodshed on earth. Ultimately, however, it's a battle between good and evil, a battle between the forces of Satan and those who have adopted his methods on the one hand and the Lamb and those who have sided with Him on the other. R

The Wrath of God

The Bible says God is love. Sometimes we find it hard to reconcile that statement with passages like those in Revelation that vividly picture His "wrath." How can He be a God of love if He's also a God of wrath and does such terrible things to people?

God doesn't dislike those who experience His wrath. Both the Old and New Testaments are consistent in portraying God as taking no "pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11; see also 2 Peter 3:9). But sin is evil because it hurts people, the innocent as well as the guilty. It breaks relationships, and it breaks hearts. God's wrath is His determination to rid the universe of the pain and death sin has brought. And sin exists only in "free moral agents"—intelligent beings who have the power of choice. That means that to rid the universe of sin, God must rid it of those who harbor sin—those who have refused His grace and clung to sin rather than to Him.



Idolatry, False Doctrines & Blasphemy

The Harlot's Doom

"

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

—REVELATION 17:5

What You'll Learn

More information about the identity of God's enemies

What God's enemies will try to force His people to do before Armageddon

The seven songs of judgment

REVELATION 15 AND 16 INTRODUCED GOD'S RESCUE OF HIS FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS USING THEMES AND IMAGES TAKEN FROM THE STORIES OF THE REDEMPTION OF ISRAEL FROM EGYPT AND BABYLON. CHAPTERS 17 AND ON, WHICH YOU'LL EXAMINE HERE AND IN THE TWO FOLLOWING CHAPTERS, EXPANDS THIS OUTLINE, DESCRIBING IN MORE DETAIL THE DESTRUCTION OF THE OPPRESSORS AND THE NEW PROMISED LAND GOD MAKES FOR HIS FAITHFUL.

In another of Revelation's chiasms, *John saw the destruction of the evil powers in the reverse order of their appearance in his visions: Babylon dies first (chapters 17, 18), then the beast and the false prophet (chapter 19), and finally, Satan, the dragon (chapter 20).*

The parallels between these sections *on the fates of the wicked and the righteous become particularly evident when you compare Revelation 17:1, 2 with chapter 21:9, 10 and chapter 19:9, 10 with chapter 22:6–9.*

FOLLOW ALONG:
Revelation Chapters 17, 18

Revelation 16 pictures Babylon as a city. Chapter 17 calls it a harlot (v. 18). Here Revelation is using Old Testament imagery (e.g., Isaiah 1:21; Hosea 2:2, 4; Jeremiah 3:1–3, 8, 9; Ezekiel 16:15–34). It was the nations of Israel and Judah that these Old Testament prophets were calling harlots—God's own people who had turned themselves into unfaithful idolaters. The harlot Babylon of Revelation's end-times, then, must represent not some foreign political oppressor, but the church—Christian people gone bad. And these false Christians persecuted God's faithful people!

The picture Revelation paints in chapters 17–19 adds a further detail, a new element, to our understanding of the God-opposing forces of the end times. Revelation 17:1 portrays the harlot sitting "on many waters," which verse 15 says represent "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues." Verse 3 says the harlot sits on a blasphemous scarlet beast that has seven heads and ten horns. Verses 9 and 12 say the heads are also mountains and the horns are kings. Daniel's prophecies make clear that heads, mountains, horns, and kings all represent one thing: nations. In other words, the peoples and multitudes on which the harlot sits—that support her—are not amorphous masses but rather organized political bodies.

"I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement."

—REVELATION 17:6

Here, then, is the new element that these chapters add to our understanding of the end times: The opposers of God and His faithful followers are made up of the combined worldwide forces of religious and political institutions!

Unchristian Coercion

As chapters 13 and 14 reveal, these powers will try to force all the people of the world to worship as they command. But while they claim to be Christian, they really aren't.

Jesus rejected the use of force *because, He said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36; also Matthew 26:52). As Elijah learned in the cave in which he sought refuge from Jezebel, God speaks to people in the still, small voice of the Spirit rather than through threats of force. Some have thought to improve the moral state of the world by forcing people to conform to God's will. But Jesus said that it's what's inside a person that defiles; cleaning up the outside does little good (Mark 7:14). Jesus pointed Nicodemus to the new birth the Holy Spirit brings as the root of the only kind of religious change that counts with God (see John 3).*

The "fornication" Revelation decries means both the acceptance by the nations of the world of the false doctrines that constitute Babylon's apostasy and the union of their powers with hers to enforce her decrees and demands. The fact that Babylon rides the beast indicates that the political powers support the apostate religious institutions and that the religious institutions control the political powers to their own ends. Verse 18 says, "And the woman whom you saw is that great city which *reigns over* the kings of the earth" (emphasis supplied).

John wrote that this woman was "drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement" (v. 6). That a pagan power would persecute the saints wouldn't have amazed John. His surprise came because it was a supposedly Christian power that was drunk with their blood.

But these chapters here are not primarily about Babylon's power. They're about its judgment and fall. The sixth plague indicates that the drying up of the river on which Babylon sits precipitates its fall. Chapter 17 pictures the same event in different terms and makes it more explicit: "The ten horns which you saw on the beast ["the kings of the earth," v. 18], these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire" (v. 16).

In other words, Revelation says the nations of the world, all of which had united in support of the apostate Christian religious institutions and tried to enforce their forms of worship, will turn against those institutions and destroy them. This is the first actual engagement of the battle of Armageddon.

Historians Thomas and Gertrude Sartory wrote, "No religion in the world ... has on its conscience so many millions of people who ... believed differently. Christianity is the most murderous religion there has ever been."

Seven Songs

The rest of this portion of Revelation is comprised of seven songs—again arranged in a chiasm. They can be summarized in this way:

A Mighty voice of an angel: "Fallen is Babylon!"
  B Heavenly voice: "Come out of her, my people!"
  C Lament of the kings: "Alas! alas!"
  C' 'Lament of the merchants: "Alas! alas!"
  C' Lament of the seafarers: "Alas! alas!"
A' Voice of a mighty angel: "So shall Babylon ... be thrown down."
  B' Heavenly voices: Praise God for Babylon's fall (Maxwell, *God Cares*, 462, 463, slightly modified).

Like so much of the rest of Revelation, these seven songs are rooted in Old Testament prophecies (for example, Jeremiah 50, 51; Ezekiel 26–28). The **FIRST TWO SONGS** announce again Babylon's fall, call God's people out of her (they must both choose to leave and act on that choice if they are to remain God's people), and call for her to be given the judgment she deserves.

In the **NEXT THREE SONGS**, the earth's kings, merchants, and seafarers mourn at the destruction of Babylon. Here it becomes evident that they didn't necessarily support Babylon because of religious conviction. Revelation says that "the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their merchandise anymore" (chapter 18:11; also v. 19). They mourn the wealth they're losing because of Babylon's fall. They supported her because it was expedient; it was good for business; they profited by it.

Notice in several of these songs the theme of justice: "Render to her just as she rendered to you" (v. 6). Together, the religious and political institutions had enforced a boycott that forbade anyone to "buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (13:17). Now the merchants, who had been part of that conspiracy, suffer because "no one buys their merchandise anymore" (18:11).

On a similar note, the last line of chapter 18:20, translated literally, reads, "God has judged her judgment against you." Babylon judged against the saints (against "you"). Now God has overturned that judgment. The Old Testament specified that the makers of false accusations must suffer the punishments they were attempting to pin on the innocent. God enforces that kind of justice. In the **SIXTH SONG**, the "mighty angel" spells it out: Babylon was responsible for the death of the martyrs; therefore, she must die (vs. 21–24).

Song of a Multitude

The final song, **THE SEVENTH SONG**, is sung by a "great multitude in heaven" (19:1). A "voice" in heaven—the 24 elders, the four living creatures, and those surrounding the throne—all call the servants of God on earth to praise the Lord for what He's done for them. He's judged the "great harlot who corrupted the earth; ... and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." His judgments

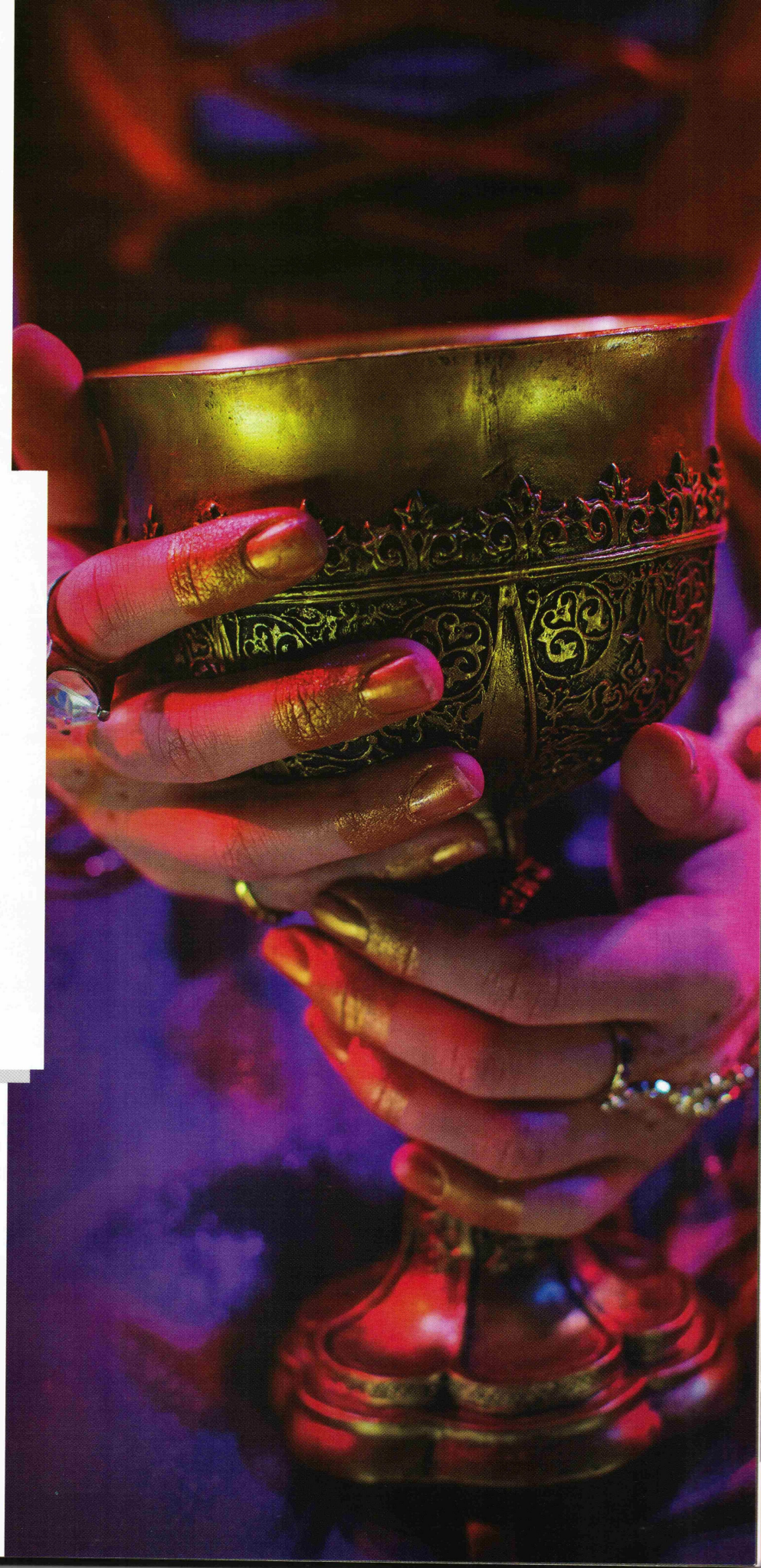
are righteous and true (v. 2). But wonderful as it is that God has put an end to the oppression of the saints, He's done more for them. He's invited them to the marriage supper of the Lamb (v. 9).

Who is this bride? In Revelation 21:2, John wrote that he saw "the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This city, "arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright" —the "righteous acts of the saints" —(19:8), stands in contrast to Babylon, the harlot city. This "New Jerusalem" represents the people who will soon become its

"If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing, then both men in the controversy shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you" (Deuteronomy 19:16–19).

inhabitants—Christ's faithful church, all the people who have chosen to trust and serve God in love, truth, and holiness.

Verse 7 says the Lamb's wife "has made herself ready." The church participates actively in her preparation. The grace of Christ does not permit us to take refuge in passiveness. Revelation continually solicits a response; it calls for endurance and obedience on the part of those who would, in the end, be counted God's faithful followers, those who wish to share in the reward of the righteous. (See, e.g., chapter 7:14; 12:11, 17; 14:12; 21:7.) R



Section 15

The King of Kings Returns

The End of Evil and Death

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

—Revelation 21:3

In the preceding section, you saw that Armageddon's first battle is described in Revelation 17:16. The passage this chapter covers, 19:11–21:8, pictures the next battle of that end-time war. It pictures that conflict as a grisly supper of the birds, contrasting it to the wedding supper of the Lamb that the righteous will attend.

Follow Along: Revelation Chapters 19–21



"Coming King", Lars Justinen.

What You'll Learn

The two feasts of Revelation

The fate of Satan

What happens during the 1,000-year reign

This portion of Revelation continues the chronological end-time sequence begun with chapter 15 and corresponds to the seven seals.

1. Both start with riders on white horses
2. Both connect the martyrs with judgment.

First, the kings and mighty men and all people, free and slave, call for death to hide them from the Lamb. Second, the death wish of this group is fulfilled.

In the first scene of this section, John wrote that he saw a warrior from heaven who judges and makes war in righteousness. The warrior is clothed in a robe dipped in blood and wears "many" crowns on His head, in contrast to the crowns on the heads and horns of the beasts in earlier chapters. He's the supreme royalty of the universe, the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (v. 16).

Note that the warrior's blood must be His own, since the battle hasn't yet begun.

John wrote that He's called "The Word" of God (v. 13), which is John's name for Jesus (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1). At the creation, the Word brought the universe into existence by speaking; now His speech becomes a sharp sword that destroys (v. 15).

The event these verses portray is Christ's second coming. Note verse 14: "The armies in heaven ... followed Him." Jesus said that when He returns, all the angels will come with Him (Matthew 25:31). Revelation says that He comes to tread "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15). Chapter 14:17 relates this treading of the winepress directly to the second coming.

The Conclusion of the Battle of Armageddon

Revelation 19:17–21 describes the main battle of Armageddon. Verse 19 depicts the two sides: "And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army." As noted above, these are the very ones who had called for the rocks and mountains to hide them from Christ's face (compare v. 18 with chapter 6:15). Verse 18 makes sure we understand that this conflict is universal; it includes "all people."

Armageddon, then, is not merely a Middle Eastern battle, nor a war between all of earth's nations. In Armageddon, the powers of earth try to overthrow God's own forces, including those people who have refused to worship the beast or receive its mark (v. 20).

Some suggest *the conflict in chapter 20:8, 9 is to be considered part of Armageddon as well.*

Like the striking of the nations with the sword, the second image in verse 15—ruling with a rod of iron—depicts destruction rather than simply firm governing; see Psalm 2:9. And the third image, that of the winepress, also is an image of death; compare Revelation 14:17.

The outcome is certain: "The beast was captured, and with him the false prophet. ... These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone" (v. 20). That's Revelation's way of saying the political and religious powers these figures represent will be destroyed, never to trouble the universe again.

"And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (v. 21). This image of the great supper of the birds was taken from Ezekiel 38 and 39. In that time, becoming food for animals of prey was the lowest depth of shame.

Ezekiel followed *his portrayal of the supper of the birds with a description of the new city and temple. Revelation follows this pattern; see chapters 19, 21, 22.*

In these verses, then, Revelation explains what happens to the wicked at Christ's return. They're killed by the sharp sword, broken with the rod of iron, and trodden in the winepress of God's wrath. They become food for birds. (See also 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10; 2:8.)

So Revelation 19 pictures two suppers. All people are invited to the first, the marriage feast of the Lamb. Those who refuse to attend that supper become part of the menu of the second. God offers only these two options. We must choose one or the other. (See Matthew 22:1–14.)

Satan's Fate

After His coming, then, Christ has taken the righteous to heaven, there to live and reign "with" Him for a thousand years (20:4).

The wicked are all dead. The beast and false prophet are gone forever, and Babylon has been destroyed. That leaves only "that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan," (v. 2) unaccounted for.

John wrote that an angel from heaven "laid hold" of him, "bound him for a thousand years," and "cast him into the bottomless pit ... so that he should deceive the nations no more



An Israeli antiquities archeologist steps down to a 1,400-year-old winepress found near the kibbutz of Hafetz Haim, in central Israel. The unusually shaped press was exceptionally large and advanced for its time.

till the thousand years were finished" (vs. 1–3).

Essentially, Satan is bound by circumstances. He deceives the nations no more because there's no one left to deceive. The wicked are all dead, and Jesus has "taken" the righteous away to heaven. (See also Isaiah 24:21–23.)

The Millennium

The next three verses (Revelation 20:4–6) describe what the righteous are doing during this thousand-year period—the famous biblical "millennium." They live and reign with Christ, and judgment is given to them. Under the fifth seal, the martyrs cried out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood" (6:10). God has judged and avenged their blood. Now He's giving them the opportunity to judge too.

John wrote that judgment was committed to "those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and to the word of God" (v. 4). The original recipients of Revelation were people facing death for their belief in Christ. John seems to have singled out the martyrs here especially to encourage those first-century Christians. But all who have professed the name of Christ, whether martyrs or not, have suffered the devil's ire. It is likely that all the righteous will do this judging.

It's not that they'll decide who's to be saved and who's not. That's all been determined before the second coming.

But there are three phases to the final judgment. The first is a pre-advent judgment (before Christ's return), which separates those who have falsely professed to be Christian from those whose profession is genuine. (This is the judgment spoken of in Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14; 8:14; 9:25; Revelation 3:5.)

Next comes the millennial judgment—in heaven—the time when the saints will judge the world and even the angels.

Apparently, before the wicked are destroyed forever, God will allow the righteous to review the case of every being in the universe, to determine that they have all been dealt with fairly. In a sense, the righteous are judging God. This judgment will establish for eternity their faith in His justice, His righteousness, and His love.

Final Judgment

Chapter 20:7–10 sketches out quickly the final, executive phase of the judgment. Here God acts to carry out the sentences He has pronounced and the saints have confirmed. Jesus said all people—both those who have done good and those who have done evil—will eventually be resurrected.

How do we understand chapter 20?

At Jesus' return, the angels gather the righteous from the four winds and then Jesus takes His people to be with Him where He is. That the righteous are taken from the earth at the second coming to celebrate the marriage of the Lamb in heaven becomes important to understanding the millennium described in chapter 20. (See Matthew 24:30, 31; John 14:1–3; cp. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.)

***The word "throne"** is used 47 times in Revelation. When used of God's or Christ's throne, it always is situated in heaven. God comes to reign upon the earth only after the millennium (chapters 21, 22). Other passages in Revelation also picture the overcomers of the beast reigning in heaven. (See chapters 3:21; 4:1, 2, 6; 15:2.)*



"Golden Balance." Lars Justinen.

The "Gog and Magog" of Revelation 20:8 come from Ezekiel's (chapters 38 and 39) description of the feast of the birds. They were the enemies of God's people who were to be destroyed in this judgment. Chapter 19:18 shows that in Revelation, they represent all the unrepentant people of the world.

"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" —1 Corinthians 6:2

The "resurrection of life" occurs at His second coming. The "resurrection of condemnation" takes place at this time, the end of the millennium. It is this resurrection that releases Satan from his prison and enables him to go out to deceive all the nations of the world (vs. 7, 8). He can deceive again because people are again living on the earth.

The next two verses tell the end of the story. Satan gathers all the wicked of all ages of earth's existence together for a final attempt to overthrow God's kingdom. They surround "the camp of the saints and the beloved city," which chapter 21:2 describes as descending from heaven at the end of the millennium. But instead, fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them.

In this brief scenario, we see the justice of the sentence the wicked receive and of the judgment they suffer. When they are resurrected, they don't repent of their sins and ask for mercy. They persist in their rebellion and actually try to physically overthrow the God they've rejected.

Chapter 20:11–15 fills in some details to the ending these verses sketch out. (It ends with the same people being cast into the lake of fire, an indication that this section is an expansion on the previous scene.) John sees "the dead, small and great, standing before God," who is seated on a "great white throne" (vs. 11, 12). "Books were opened"—among them, the Book of Life—and "the dead were judged according to their works." "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (v. 15).

What's the purpose? Ever since Satan brought sin into the universe, God has allowed it to continue so people could see its true and ultimate nature. If God had immediately destroyed sin and sinners, His created beings would have worshiped Him from fear of His power rather than from respect for His justice and love. Now, at the end of the millennium, everyone, even those destined to destruction, will admit that God was right all along. This final part of the millennial review strengthens the faith of the righteous. It's part of God's plan to see that

"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." —John 5:28, 29

The Millennium

Beginning of the Millennium

- Second coming of Christ
- Resurrection of the righteous
- Destruction of the wicked
- Righteous taken to heaven
- Earth wracked by a great earthquake
- Satan bound to the desolate earth

During the Millennium

- Righteous in heaven; they judge the world and angels
- Wicked dead on the earth
- Satan "bound" to the earth

End of the Millennium

- New Jerusalem descends from heaven to earth
- Resurrection of the wicked
- Satan loosed
- Satan and the wicked attack the New Jerusalem
- Great white throne judgment
- Fire consumes Satan and the wicked; cleanses the earth

Earth Recreated; Eternity Begins

"affliction will not rise up a second time" (Nahum 1:9).

Death and the grave ("Hades") have no part in paradise restored, so Revelation pictures them being destroyed in the same lake of fire that eliminates sin and sinners from the universe (chapter 20:14, 15).

John ends this section with a brief portrayal of the new heaven and earth in which God will dwell with His people and in which there will be "no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying," nor pain (chapter 21:3, 4). He writes that God will "give of the fountains of the water of life freely to him who thirsts," and reminds his readers that those who overcome "shall inherit all things." But those who persist in their sin, he warns, "shall have their part in the lake ... which is the second death" (vs. 6–8).

That choice is ours too. R

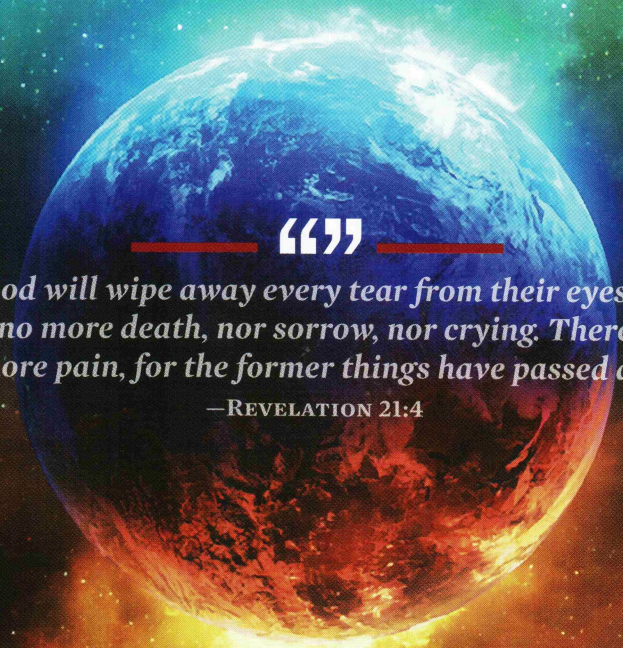
***Revelation 20** tells us the fate of the devil.*

***Paul wrote,** "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10, 11). And when writing to the Philippians, he said that the time is coming when every intelligent being of the universe will bow and "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Revelation 2:10, 11). This "great white throne" judgment appears to be the only time when Paul's prophecies could be fulfilled.*

***2 Peter 3** also speaks of the cleansing fire and then the new heaven and earth.*



Paradise Restored



> *And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*
>
> —Revelation 21:4

No More Death, No More Sorrow

THE BOOK OF REVELATION HAS MORE THAN ITS SHARE OF DOOM AND GLOOM, WITH ITS DRAGONS AND BEASTS AND FALSE PROPHETS, ITS EARTHQUAKES AND HAILSTORMS AND LAKES OF FIRE. BUT THE REWARD FOR FAITHFULNESS JOHN DESCRIBED IN REVELATION'S LAST TWO CHAPTERS COMPENSATES FOR ALL THAT'S GONE BEFORE. THE NEW WORLD THAT GOD WILL CREATE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS TO ENJOY ENCOURAGES US TO HANG ON WITH PATIENT ENDURANCE TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JESUS THROUGH ALL THE TROUBLE THE DRAGON AND HIS ALLIES MIGHT BRING.

Follow Along: Revelation Chapters 21, 22

What You'll Learn

The purpose and design of New Jerusalem

The new Eden

The nearness of Jesus' return

In Revelation's overall structure, chapters 21 and 22 parallel the vision of the seven churches. That vision pictured the church erosion down through history. These last chapters portray the church triumphant. The messages to the seven churches each concluded with a specific promise to those who would "overcome." These chapters reveal the fulfillment of those promises.

Previously, in another chapter, another parallelism involving this part of Revelation was introduced: The vision of the heavenly city New Jerusalem stands in a parallel of contrast to the earlier vision of the great earthly city Babylon. That city was the product of human hands—remember Nebuchadnezzar's boast, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). It represented rebellion against God and the consequent oppression, suffering, and death. The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven entirely the work of God; humankind has nothing to do with building it. Along with it come life, joy, and light.

Both sections picture these "cities" also as women. Babylon is a harlot. It is Christianity become unfaithful, prostituting itself to the political and economic powers of the world. On the other hand, John saw the New Jerusalem as a pure bride—imagery representing the exclusiveness of the saints' relationship with Christ (see Revelation 19:7, 8; 21:27).

Jerusalem Restored

Revelation portrays the New Jerusalem as the fulfillment of God's promise through the Old Testament prophets to restore His people Israel, their city, and their land. Like Ezekiel, John was carried to "a great and high mountain" from which he saw the city. The features of that city—its high walls, square shape, gates named after each of the 12 tribes, and presence of the throne and glory of God—all are rooted in Ezekiel's visions.

But Revelation extends those Old Testament promises to include all people of the earth—all who will respond to the gospel invitation. Notice, for instance, that while the gates are named after the 12 tribes of Israel, the foundations of the city are named after the patriarchs of the Christian era, the 12 apostles (21:14). Here John reminds us of Paul's statement that the Christian community is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 2:20).

The gems and precious metals used as building materials no doubt are meant to convey both the value and beauty of what God has planned for His faithful people.



Having described the exterior of the city, John moved inside. Immediately he exclaimed, "I saw no temple in it" (chapter 21:22). One can imagine John's surprise. The temple was both the showpiece and the most important structure of ancient Jerusalem. In addition, most of the action in Revelation was specifically said to have originated from the heavenly temple. No doubt John expected to see the ultimate temple in this, the ultimate city of God.

To see this parallel, compare Revelation 21:10 to Ezekiel 40:2. See also Ezekiel 40:2-5; 43:2-7; 44:6-14; 48:20, 31-34.

The Old Testament tabernacle and the temples that succeeded it represented God's dwelling among His people. But while they represented His presence, they also represented separation.

Because of sin, people could not live in God's immediate presence; they could not look upon His face and live. So the temple contained a series of compartments separated by veils. Lay people could go no farther than the courtyard. There two veils stood between them and God's presence. The common priests could enter the holy places of the temples but were still separated by a veil from God's presence. Only the high priest had access to the Most Holy Place—the divine throne room where the Shekinah rested upon the mercy seat—and only one day a year after having carried out special rites and having surrounded himself with a thick cloud of incense.

The temple meant God's presence. But it was a dangerous presence, one from which the temple separated the people of God. John "saw no temple" in the New Jerusalem for two reasons ...

1. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (v. 22). The saints need no screening. They will have direct access to God.

2. The New Jerusalem is a cube: "its length, breadth, and height are equal" (Revelation 21:16). Its shape mirrors those of the Most Holy Places of the Old Testament tabernacle and temples.

In other words, the New Jerusalem itself is eternity's Most Holy Place, God's dwelling place, His throne room. But it's a Most Holy Place that all His people can enter. In fact, they will live there, directly in God's presence, forever and ever.

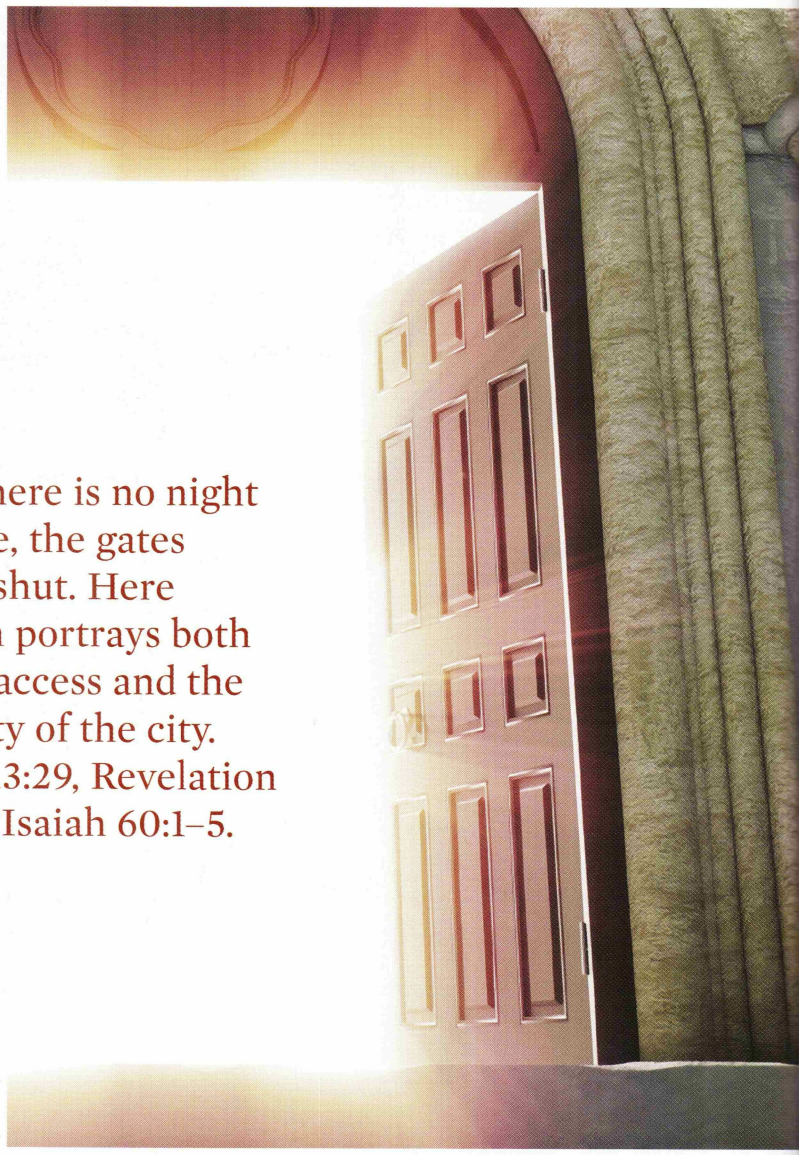
Here is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise at the time of the Exodus: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Leviticus 26:12). Here is the fulfillment of the promise of "Immanuel"—"God with us." Now "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them ... and God Himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3).

The New Eden

The New Jerusalem needs no other light source than the glory of God. "The nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light" (vs. 23, 24).

Another theme from the Exodus story: the pillar of cloud and fire that lighted Israel's way through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21).

Interestingly, the Greek word usually used for "tree" is *dendron*. But when writing of the tree of life, John used the word *xulon*—the word also used of the cross. John might have meant to suggest that the cross is a tree of life for earth's inhabitants.



Light was God's first creation. He brought it into existence before He made the sun, moon, and stars. God's new creation also features a light that eliminates the need for sun and moon. More than that, there is "no night there" (v.25). All that is dark and obscure is eliminated. The revelation of Christ is fully accomplished. All is definitively clear.

Revelation's description of the New Jerusalem closes with more imagery drawn from earth's beginnings. John saw "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb"—reminiscent of the river that "went out of Eden" to water the earth. On both banks of this river grows Eden's tree of life, which supplies fruit throughout the whole year and the leaves of which are for the "healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1, 2; compare Genesis 2:9, 10 and Ezekiel 47.)

Because there is no night in paradise, the gates are never shut. Here Revelation portrays both continual access and the universality of the city. See Luke 13:29, Revelation 21:24, and Isaiah 60:1–5.

> The water of life and tree of life indicate humankind's continued dependence on God.
>
> The tree of life—its fruit and leaves—is a reminder that only God is eternal, has life in Himself. Man's eternity is an eternity continuously received from God. ... God's gift will always be there to impart life (symbol of the tree) to heal man from his essential finitude (symbol of the leaves). ... Even in eternity all is grace.[1]

In another reference to the stories of Creation and the Fall, verse 3 says "there shall be no more curse." Here the reference is by contrast. The first man and woman succumbed to the serpent's temptation, and curses fell upon them, the serpent, and all creation. Now the serpent has been destroyed. Judgment has been rendered. The entire universe has confessed God's justice and His love. The faith of the citizens of the New Jerusalem has been established on such a firm foundation as never again to waver. So "affliction shall not rise up a second time" (Nahum 1:9). Consequently, "there shall be no more curse" (v. 3). And "they shall reign forever and ever" (v. 5).

"I Am Coming Quickly"

At the end of Daniel's series of visions, he was told to shut and seal his book until the time of the end (Daniel 12:4). His prophecies had little application to his own generation; they concerned mainly people who would live much later. In direct contrast, John was told, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand" (Revelation 22:10). John's visions

concern the whole lifespan of the Christian church, starting in his day.

While Revelation has spoken to Christians down through history, it is particularly meaningful to those living in the crux between its historical and its end-time prophecies—to you, in other words. You are living in the days of "the things which must shortly take place" (v. 6; compare 1:1, 3). You are living in the time of Laodicea, the last church; in the time of the sixth seal; between the sixth and seventh trumpets. The messages of the three angels of chapter 14—God's final warning—are being proclaimed around the earth today.

Three times in Revelation's last chapter Jesus tells John, "I am coming quickly" (vs. 7, 12, 20). Soon the angel will announce, "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still" (v. 11).

After His second promise that He would come soon, Jesus added, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (v. 13). Here His words reflect the message of Hebrews, where He's called "the author and finisher of our faith" (chapter 12:2). Paul made this thought a promise: "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

"He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

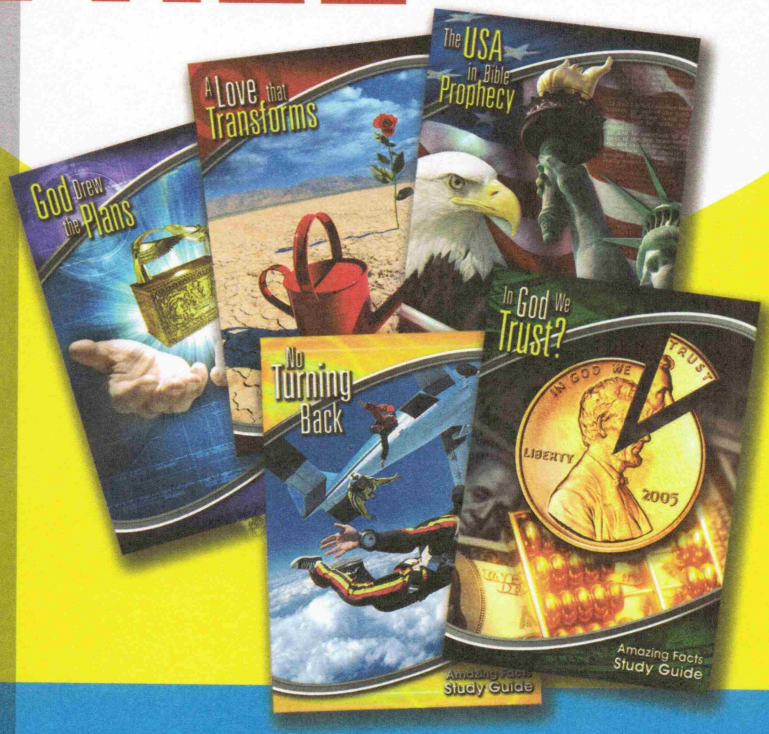
So Revelation calls for fidelity to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus in times of great persecution. But it also offers the assurance of the constant presence of the Lamb who was slain to grant us forgiveness and grace. He can hold the dragon at bay in our personal struggles as well as in the great cosmic conflict.

And to whom is the Lamb's aid available? To "him who thirsts" for the water of life (Revelation 22:17). To all such, "the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' " R

Reference

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